



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

THE ONLY TRUE PHILOSOPHERS?

CHARISMATIC PERFORMANCES OF UNOFFICIAL PHILOSOPHY IN SOCIALIST CZECHOSLOVAKIA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of PhD (Sociology)

By

Dominik Želinský

The University of Edinburgh

2019

I hereby confirm that this doctoral thesis has been written entirely by myself, is solely the product of my own work unless otherwise specified, and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed:

Date: 31st October 2019

Abstract

In this thesis, I explore the phenomenon of unofficial philosophy seminars in socialist Czechoslovakia, focusing on the period from 1968 to 1989. After the democratizing movement known as the Prague Spring was terminated by Soviet military intervention in August 1968, intellectuals who supported the reforms were marginalised in their workplaces and often removed. More generally, people associated with the emerging anti-Communist opposition had slim chances of enrolling at university courses or acquiring a university job. Rather than giving up on their academic aspirations, these intellectuals began organising a parallel intellectual life, usually in the form of study groups, with former or aspiring academics lecturing on topics as different as robotics and literary theory. Philosophy was at the forefront of this movement, especially thanks to an intense clandestine connection with Western academics from Oxford University, which was initiated by the Czechoslovaks in 1979. Between 1979 and 1989, dozens of British, French, German and Dutch (among them well-known figures such as Ernest Gellner, Jurgen Habermas, or Jacques Derrida) academics crossed the ‘iron curtain’ on a tourist visa to lecture in the flats of Czechoslovak dissidents. This thesis focuses on the situation in Prague, where the scene of unofficial philosophy was the most active – and where unofficial philosophers were, at the same, under the most intensive pressure from state authorities.

To explore this phenomenon, I relied on a combination of interviews with former participants, original philosophy reviews from samizdat journals, the archive of a supporting Jan Hus Educational Foundation founded in 1979 at Oxford University, and the files of the Czechoslovak secret police. Through qualitative hermeneutic analysis of these sources, I created a historical interpretive ethnography of unofficial philosophy seminars which combines the reconstruction of social interactions with the reconstruction of their meanings.

My approach challenges the conventional sociological theories of intellectuals, such as those of Pierre Bourdieu and Randall Collins, which present intellectuals as actors interested predominantly in their own success in the global disciplinary scene or realising the ambitions of their social stratum. However, as I argue, such an approach cannot account for unofficial philosophers who had relatively little to gain from their

activities, but quite a lot to lose due to intense interest of the secret police, especially with regard to their international connections. To properly understand unofficial philosophers, it is necessary to look closely on the meanings they articulated and the processes by which they articulated them. To explore these, I use the theory of performance developed by the Strong Program school in cultural sociology. I argue, however, that instead of looking at ‘spotlight’ performances that draw large audiences in extraordinary moments and were so far the main focus of analyses using this theory, it is useful also for analysing small-scale, routinised performances.

In the empirical chapters of my thesis, I demonstrate that unofficial philosophers were charismatic performers who articulated a variety of moral commitments and were able to create communities of interested and devoted audiences, whom they were persuaded about the meaningfulness of pursuing the general project of anti-authoritarian opposition. By articulating powerful moral symbols in impressive educational performances, they helped the unofficial, non-conformist network to exist despite consistent pressure of the police. As I note in the conclusion, the performance theory of intellectuals offers a path to a better understanding of intellectual success and impact, as well as failure to achieve it, and is very well applicable to currently popular intellectual figures.

This thesis, therefore, has two major contributions to knowledge. The first is the novel performance approach to intellectuals that highlights their real-life presentation rather than relying merely on their textual product, and emphasises the moral dimension of their behaviour rather than reducing them to seekers of prestige and public attention. Second, this thesis contributes to the historical knowledge of an under-researched phenomenon in Czechoslovak history and the history of East-West relations during the Cold War, especially by systematising the narrative of the unofficial seminars’ historical development and recovering data about forgotten projects that were central to the development of the anti-Communist opposition.

Lay Summary

In this thesis, I explore the phenomenon of unofficial philosophy seminars in socialist Czechoslovakia, focusing on the period from 1968 to 1989. After the democratizing movement known as the Prague Spring was terminated by Soviet military intervention in August 1968, intellectuals who supported the reforms were marginalised in their workplaces and often removed. More generally, people associated with the emerging opposition to the regime had slim chances of enrolling at university courses or acquiring academic jobs. Unofficial seminars emerged as a reaction to this situation, with former or aspiring academic intellectuals creating study groups and lecturing on topics as different as robotics and literary theory. Philosophy was at the forefront of this movement, especially thanks to an intense clandestine connection with Western academic philosophers from Oxford University, initiated by the Czechoslovaks in 1979. Between 1979 and 1989, dozens of British, French, German and Dutch (among them well-known figures such as Ernest Gellner, Jurgen Habermas, or Jacques Derrida) academics crossed the ‘iron curtain’ on a tourist visa to lecture in the flats of Czechoslovak dissidents. To explore this phenomenon, I relied on a combination of interviews with former participants, original philosophy reviews from samizdat journals, the archive of a supporting Jan Hus Educational Foundation founded in 1979 at Oxford University, and the files of the Czechoslovak secret police.

My approach challenges the conventional sociological outlook on intellectuals which casts them as actors focused especially on prestige and institutional position. Such an approach cannot account for unofficial philosophers who had relatively little to gain from their activities, but quite a lot to lose. I suggest that sociologists should see these intellectuals as performers who articulated a variety of moral commitments and were able to spawn communities of interested – if not devoted – audiences, whom they were able to persuade about the meaningfulness of pursuing the general project of anti-authoritarian opposition. Thus, they helped the unofficial, non-conformist network to exist despite consistent pressure of the police. As I note in the conclusion, the performance theory of intellectuals offers a path to a better understanding of intellectual success and impact, as well as failure to achieve it, and is very well applicable to currently popular intellectual figures.

This thesis, therefore, has two major contributions to knowledge. First is the novel performance approach to intellectuals that highlights their real-life presentation rather than relying merely on their textual product, and emphasises the moral dimension of their behaviour rather than reducing them to seekers of prestige and public attention. Second, this thesis contributes to the historical knowledge of an under-researched phenomenon in Czechoslovak history and the history of East-West relations during the Cold War, especially by systematising the narrative of the unofficial seminars' historical development and recovering data about forgotten projects that were central to the development of anti-Communist opposition.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	12
Introduction	13
CHAPTER 1: From Social Dependence to Charismatic Performance: Towards a Cultural Explanation of Unofficial Philosophy Seminars.....	25
Sociological Theories of Academic Intellectuals to Date	27
From Classes and Strata to Networks and Fields: The Social Explanation in the Sociologies of Intellectuals	27
From Identity to Performance: Towards a Cultural Explanation of Intellectual Life	35
The Strong Program Approach: From Discourse to Performance	41
The Elements of Performance	43
Ordinary Performances in Extraordinary Times	49
The Charisma Process	51
Symbolic Representation and Boundary-Work	58
Conclusion	61
CHAPTER 2: Methods	64
Interpretive Historical Ethnography.....	64
Identification and Selection of Data Sources	66
Roads Not Taken.....	69
Data Sources.....	70
Interviews	70
Secret Police Dossiers	73
Jan Hus Educational Foundation Documents	78
Samizdat Reviews and Articles.....	82
Data Analysis	85

Ethics.....	86
Limitations	90
Positionality	91
CHAPTER 3: Unofficial Philosophy Education in Normalised Prague	95
The Prehistory of Unofficial Seminars: Before 1968	96
Unofficial Seminars After 1968	99
Conclusion	112
CHAPTER 4: The Deconstruction of Certainty: The Secret Police and Prague's Non-Conformist Network	115
Distrust and Uncertainty In Socialist Czechoslovakia	117
Between Intervention and Subornation: Destabilising Strategies of The Secret Police	120
Direct Interventions.....	120
Observation	124
Prophylaxis.....	128
Subornation	131
Resisting the Police	134
Conclusion: A Network Destabilised.....	136
CHAPTER 5: The Sages and the Taskmasters: Charismatic Performances of Czechoslovak Unofficial Philosophers	138
The Sages of Philosophy: Charisma of Intellectual Virtuosity and Deep Knowledge	142
The Taskmasters: The Charisma of Disciplinary Rigour.....	157
Neither a Sage nor a Taskmaster: Divisive Performances in Unofficial Philosophy	163
Conclusion	168
CHAPTER 6: The Masters of Truth: Boundary-Work and the Meaning of Philosophy in the Czechoslovak Non-Conformist Network	171

Only the Worthy Philosophers: Articulating the Official/Unofficial Split	174
The Science of Authenticity: The Symbolic Premise of Charismatic Performance .	180
‘Now That I Think about It Again...’: Clear Boundary-Work, Blurred Boundaries	191
A One-Man Counter-Discourse: Dealing with the Loyal Opposition in Unofficial Discourse.....	195
Conclusion	199
CHAPTER 7: The Consolation of Philosophy: Performance, Solidarity, and Subjectivities among Non-Conformist Actors in socialist Czechoslovakia	201
Spaces of Solidarity.....	204
Unofficial Performances and Non-Conformist Subjectivities	217
Conclusion	228
CHAPTER 8: Conclusion	231
REFERENCES.....	242
REFERENCES: SAMIZDAT ARTICLES.....	259
REFERENCES: JAN HUS EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION ARCHIVE.....	261
Appendix 1: Secret Police Dossiers	262
Appendix 2: Interview List	263
Appendix 3: Interview Information Sheet	264
Appendix 4: Sample Interview Schedule (Interview 4).....	266

Acknowledgements

First, I am thankful to both my supervisors, Lisa McCormick and Ross Bond, from whom I received support, encouragement, and help ever since I applied to the PhD program. Moreover, they both defied Pierre Bourdieu's definition of the doctoral thesis as a document that 'enables the professors to exercise a lasting control over those aspiring to their succession' (Bourdieu, 1990: 154).

Second, I am thankful to the Economic and Social Research Council and the University of Edinburgh without whose support I would not be able to carry out the PhD research. I am further grateful to other funding bodies that provided me with additional support: Jan Hus Educational Foundation, Tatra Banka, and Social Science History Association.

Third, I am thankful to the interviewees who offered their time and patience to answer my question about their past. I am thankful to the Archive of Jan Hus Educational Foundation based at the Moravian Library in Brno.

Fourth, I am thankful to those close to me who encouraged and supported me or simply were there when I needed.

Introduction

When sociologists approach the phenomenon of intellectuals, they tend to see these social actors, the ‘men of knowledge’ or ‘men of ideas’ described by Znaniecki ([1940]1986) and Coser ([1965]1997), as a group related somehow to social power – either maintaining it by securing the cultural order of the community (Shils, 1958) or striving to establish their rule over it (Gouldner, 1979). Even in more recent works, intellectuals are actors who, first of all, seek public success (Baert, 2012, 2015), and it is this public success that justifies the sociological interest in them. They are devoted, rational, and spend their time engaging in academic squabbles over the position of their discipline or generation (Abbott, 2001; Bourdieu, 1990; Steinmetz, 2017). Obsessed with prestige, financial and emotional gratification, intellectuals struggle over limited ‘attention space’ (Collins, 1998) with their sole commitment being to enter their name in history. Only seldom sociologists diverge from exploring this drive for success – usually to ask why it did not come or why it faded (McLaughlin, 1998).

Perhaps the reason for this fetish of triumph among sociologists of intellectuals is the fact that they usually explore the lives of actors who live in societies that are either democratic or, at least, sympathetic to the idea of intellectual success in a freely chosen field. Even sociologists like Randall Collins, who in his analysis of global dynamics of philosophy captured much of the disciplinary history, focused on institutionalised forms of intellectual endeavour that emerge within universities, courts, and other places of learning (Collins, 1998). Others focused on intellectuals in England and France (Baert, 2015; Bourdieu, 1990; Steinmetz, 2017), or America (Gross, 2008). Sometimes, they lamented the extinction of intellectuals (Jacoby, 2000) or asked whether they were ever present in the first place (Collini, 2007).

My thesis challenges this established approach both in its theoretical orientation and the choice of the empirical case. Drawing especially on the theory of performance developed by the Strong Program in cultural sociology (Alexander and Smith, 2001), I propose that instead of public success, sociologists should focus on how intellectuals produce and deliver meanings to their audiences. To understand how intellectuals operate, sociologists should study not only how intellectuals ‘position’ themselves in the discourse (Baert, 2012) but how they entice followers in daily life. It is necessary to

explore how successful – even charismatic – performances affect those who witness them and, especially, those who attend them over and over again in lectures and seminars. Intellectuals present themselves daily to audiences, which can be turned into charged, motivated, and creative communities. Often, however, their seminar rooms are dull and silent. What sets the former apart from the latter?

I argue that to adequately understand the dynamics of intellectuals' lives, sociologists need to stop seeing them as interested merely in seeking success or power. These are, unfortunately, unjustly distributed only among the select few whose work resonates felicitously with the public and who are well-positioned to acquire jobs at powerful or even iconic institutions. Intellectuals need to be seen as driven by socially constructed moral codes and symbols that they themselves interpret in their narratives. They spread these narratives to their audiences. Here, they can be extremely successful and influential even without ever 'making it' in the grand scheme of history. To understand these aspects of intellectual life, however, sociologists need to shift the focus of their empirical studies to cases that lend themselves less easily to interpretations which highlight the drive for success. What about those 'organic intellectuals' (Gramsci, 1989) who represent the cause of disadvantaged communities? One can hardly fail to see that besides the zweckrational interests that may and may not be present, what looms large is motivation spurred by a sense of moral distinction. I believe that looking at the lives of intellectuals from this perspective and seeing them as performing actors both driven by and articulating moral commitments in effective narratives, will illuminate better also the cases in more familiar, democratic contexts. It will highlight the cultural logic behind their success or failure and the nature of emergent ties between intellectuals and their audiences. This doctoral thesis explores a case that requires just this kind of sociology: unofficial philosophy in socialist Czechoslovakia.

To write about intellectuals, indeed, first requires a definition. Who are intellectuals? Perhaps surprisingly, the answer to this question proved to be anything but easy throughout the convoluted history of thinking about this strange category which, of course, tends to somehow include also the thinking subject itself. For much of the 20th century, intellectuals were seen as an objective social category, the educated 'clerics' written about by Julien Benda (2006 [1927]) or the technocracy seeking political and social ascent (Konrad and Szelenyi, 1979). Over time, however, this definition proved

unfruitful – what these scholars talked about was the general educated class, the intelligentsia, a concept that is distinct from that of the intellectual. More recently, sociologists progressed towards definitions that highlight the elements of performance (Eyerman, 2011) and the role of textual interventions in the field that is recognised as that of intellectual expressions (Baert, 2015). Intellectuals are actors who turn to wider audiences to communicate their own ideas as well as ideas of others (or ideas deemed to be produced by supernatural entities) with the explicit aim of systematising, relating, and interpreting them in order to shed light on the world that social actors inhabit. They engage in more or less systematic reflection and relate, in one way or another, to chosen thought tradition/s.

As is well-known, the socialist states of Eastern Europe, as well as the Soviet Union, intensely restricted the structure of scientific production and process. Czechoslovakia was no exception, and after the Communist Party established its political hegemony in 1948, it imposed a ‘regulatory framework’ (Oates-Indruchová, 2008) dictating which forms of scientific pursuits were desirable in the peaceful fight for the Communist future, and which were not. Social sciences and the humanities were influenced very significantly, as Marxism-Leninism was seen as the ultimate intellectual agenda which, in principle, surpassed the previous, bourgeois forms of inquiry. It offered scientific solutions to all troubles of society. For example, with dialectic materialism, there was no need for sociology, which was completely de-institutionalised for almost two decades, between 1948 and 1964 (Skovajsa and Balon, 2017). Non-Marxist philosophy and historiography met a similar fate. Intellectuals working in these disciplines, who did not wish to shift their focus to the Marxist doctrine, experienced hardship and were often expelled from their workplace – in many cases by their former students who after 1948 for a while seized power over universities and established a ‘studentocracy’ (Connelly, 2000: 192).

A period of rejuvenation in the scientific field came in the mid-1960s and especially during the 1968 era of democratizing reforms (Skilling, 1976), known colloquially as ‘the Prague Spring’. After the reform movement was terminated in August 1968 by the military intervention of the Warsaw Pact armies, the new counter-revolutionary government led by Gustáv Husák, installed in 1969, initiated the process of ‘normalisation’. This process, which restored the strong position of the Communist

Party, resulted in Czechoslovakia ‘having one of the most rigidly conservative and repressive regimes in Eastern Europe’ (Sobell, 1987: 35). Just like two decades before, this process had a significant impact on universities and research institutes. Many intellectuals who enthusiastically supported the reform movement suddenly found themselves marginalised and even expelled from the public life of the country – as open critics of its new course, they were banned from publishing their books and articles. Between 1970 and 1972, at Charles University’s Faculty of Philosophy alone, 55 academics were dismissed as politically unreliable or emigrated from the country (Jareš, 2014: 38). In the following decade, people who could not demonstrate sufficient commitment to the socialist cause experienced a hard time finding academic employment in the humanities or social sciences. To find an academic job was virtually impossible if one was involved in any form of political activism. Moreover, children of political activists were often unable to enrol at institutions of tertiary education. The situation yet worsened in 1977, when a group of dissident intellectuals, including important philosophers (Jan Patočka, Ladislav Hejránek, Jiří Němec), signed a petition known as *Charter 77*, which rightfully criticised the Czechoslovak state for flagrant violations of civil rights, which its representatives agreed to protect by signing the Helsinki Accords in 1975. The community of signatories developed into a social movement with its own publications and spokespersons. Predictably, this only intensified the persecution from the state.

In this environment, intellectuals who were marginalised in their workplaces, or individuals who were unable to fulfil their ambition to become institutionally legitimised intellectuals due to their involvement with the emerging opposition, began organising an alternative structure of intellectual and scientific life. They published in DIY samizdat magazines (cultural reviews as well as expert journals), translated academic literature (both unavailable works from the West and East alike, and the classics) convened expert seminars and lectured to audiences of people who, in the oppressive Czechoslovak system, had slim chances of enrolling in humanities or social science courses at universities. At the forefront of the unofficial intellectual life were philosophers, either by training or self-definition. A philosopher was also involved in one of the most important projects of this environment. In 1979, Julius Tomin, a former employee of the Academy of Sciences who organised an unofficial seminar on classic

Greek philosophy, wrote a letter to several Western institutions, asking for help and support. One of them, the University of Oxford, replied. Its faculty of philosophy decided to set up a foundation entitled the Jan Hus Educational Foundation, to support the Czechoslovaks, and, from 1979 on, provided resources, planned courses, and arranged visits from Western intellectuals who would cross the Iron Curtain on tourist visas to lecture in the flats of Czechoslovak dissidents. Similar funds emerged in France, the Netherlands, and the US. In 1988, the University of Cambridge accredited one of the courses, Milan Balabán's religious philosophy seminar, and conferred diplomas on its graduates. All this, of course, went on under the close surveillance of the Czechoslovak secret police.

To date, these seminars have received little attention from historians and sociologists. The only comprehensive publication is Barbara Day's *Velvet Philosophers* (Day, 1999). The book, however, is an account written by a direct participant rather than a meticulous historical text. During the late 1980s, Day was a member of the Jan Hus Educational Foundation, and a secretary to its director, the conservative philosopher Roger Scruton. Daniel Kroupa's *Dějiny Kampademie* [The History of Kampademie] is also a text written by a direct participant and organiser, intended as a memoir rather than a precise account of unofficial seminars. The book focuses on Kampademie, its author's main intellectual project, a periodical symposium of several intellectuals, all of whom, while marginalised in the 1970s and 1980s, went on to become famous and influential in local and global politics (the future president Václav Havel among them). Finally, the third published work on unofficial seminars is a project by graduate students of the philosophy department at Charles University, *Filosofie v podzemí – Filosofie v zázemí* [Philosophy in the Underground – Philosophy in the Background], which explores the problem of unofficial philosophy during late socialism and in the 1990s (Bendová et al., 2013). The publication, however, lacks any systematic and critical study and consists mostly of texts written by the former participants in the network of unofficial philosophy, and archival documents.

Besides proposing a novel approach to the phenomenon of intellectuals, this thesis seeks to begin closing this gap. Begin, indeed, because I could not capture all the varied activities of intellectuals beyond the state system and I had to define a reasonable aperture for my inquiry. Therefore, the focus of this thesis is on enterprises with clear

educational intention and, usually, a common generational dynamic in which a more experienced researcher offers his or her interpretation to younger or less academically seasoned audiences. I excluded from my analysis, therefore, phenomena such as translation projects or expert collaborative circles (although they are mentioned where relevant in the historical part of the thesis). I believe that this choice enabled me to better illustrate the abovementioned moral and performance aspects of intellectual life. Although participation in translation and small-scale expert projects enhanced reputation and skill of performers, they were generally either solitary undertakings or small-scale groups of friends, which do not sufficiently capture how actors present themselves as intellectuals and entice followers. I also decided to focus on Prague's unofficial intellectual scene, which, being located in the country's capital city that accommodated the most prestigious Czechoslovak academic institution, Charles University, was the most active and persistent.

Throughout the thesis, I refer to these seminars as 'unofficial' for want of a better term, while recognising conceptual problems with dividing the social world into the binary official and unofficial realities, which usually appears as an unproblematic factual description of Eastern European societies under communism (Kůželová et al., 2018; Stibbe and McDermott, 2006). I believe, however, that this seemingly clear and simple distinction is deeply influenced by the boundary-work of dissident intellectuals who situated themselves as legitimate counterparts to the state discourse, effectively thus dividing the reality into two even spheres (the official and the unofficial) of which the second was perceived to be morally superior. This distinction into official and unofficial hinges on a Manichean metaphysics of history in which Czechoslovak society is seen as enslaved by the evil Communist Party and faced with two choices – to collaborate or resist. As Veronika Pehe recently argued, this popular version of Czechoslovak history is facilitated by the continuous 'search for heroes' of the anti-Communist struggle in the current discourse (Pehe, 2019). But the reality was much less clear-cut, as researchers argued recently (Kolář and Pullmann, 2017). In short, these categories are imprecise. For example, was a manuscript written by an employee of a state institute but not published an unofficial manuscript? Were seminars that took place outside of the educational system unofficial even when, as I show in one case, their convener visited a university and invited its students and employees to the meeting? Indeed, it is even

worse when it comes to categorising actors. Were people who usually taught at unofficial seminars, but at some point received an invitation from a sympathetic university employee to give guest lectures at his course, suddenly officially teaching unofficials? In other words, while sometimes useful, this distinction does not apply to everything.

Yet, other alternatives were even less acceptable. The cumbersome yet colloquial ‘flat seminars’ is also imprecise, as the seminars did not take place only in flats.

‘Underground’ seminars, another colloquial term, is too evocative. The subterranean metaphor is suggestive of the term ‘andrgraund’, a Czech phonetical spelling of the term ‘underground’ that was adopted by the Czech anti-Communist counter-culture close to the hippie movement, which was organised around rock music (Hagen, 2019). While many unofficial seminar participants belonged to this environment, not all of them did. And of course, only a few of the seminars took place in subterranean spaces. ‘Parallel’, championed in particular by Václav Benda (2018), himself a dissident intellectual, suggest a higher degree of symmetry and development than what took place in reality. Unofficial seminars were not parallel to the educational system (although some participants perceived them as such) and generally lacked any structure beyond that of a two-semester course. Many resembled reading groups with the goal of deep exploration of one book or selected chapters in philosophy. Unofficial, therefore, appeared to be the least problematic option.

My research on unofficial philosophy seminars was guided by three fundamental research questions.

Research Question 1: Why did people participate in unofficial philosophy seminars?

Studying a highly abstract subject such as philosophy, and having to read Plato’s dialogues and study Greek and Latin, seems impractical. Even more so in circumstances where this knowledge did not come with any tangible credentials (e.g. university diploma) and could hardly be demonstrated in official arenas of intellectual debate, such as journals. What, then, attracted individuals to unofficial seminars?

Research Question 2: What meaning structures underpinned the emergence and continuation of unofficial philosophy seminars? Forms of knowledge such as philosophy are not only themselves formed by meaning structures, but they are also

usually enmeshed in meanings that express their nature and purpose. What were the meanings associated with official and unofficial philosophy in socialist Czechoslovakia?

Research Question 3: How did unofficial philosophy seminars influence their audiences? Standard educational institutions usually equip their graduates with a set of skills (from analytical and practical to linguistic) as well as social networks that they often draw on in their eventual careers. Was this also true in the case of unofficial seminars?

The answers I offer to these questions, and the general arguments of my thesis, flow from the work of Émile Durkheim ([1912] 1995), who analysed the symbolic and social world of Australian tribes in order to understand his own contemporary society. According to Durkheim, periodic ritual expressions of collective beliefs was what helped to maintain the social structure and symbolic universes of these tribes, whose affective ties and moral sense of belonging would dissipate without powerful confirmations. In my thesis, congruently with some later interpretations of Durkheimian sociology (Shils, 1958), intellectuals are seen as actors who are capable of spawning such ritual-like events. Together with sociologists such as Eyerman (2011), however, I do not see intellectuals as actors firmly assigned to a place in the social structure. Rather than have it conferred on them by an external formalised entity, they must assume this position by performance. My case indeed requires this, as unofficial intellectuals had to perform as intellectuals to prove their position in a situation where few formal credentials were granted. Instead, their position was actively delegitimised by the state. As I will argue, in a non-conformist environment that existed on the verge of anomie and was constantly destabilised by interventions of the socialist police, some unofficial philosophers were able to deliver such impressive performances that they enticed their audiences and persuaded them that pursuing philosophy as well as the general moral project of the anti-Communist opposition was worth the risk. They appeared as charismatic, in a Weberian sense (1968), as gifted with the *afflatus* of philosophy. In other words, the shapes and forms of these seminars can be explained as a combination of powerful symbols delivered in a manner that resonated with audience, whose members lived in a situation that was close to anomie. Finally, unofficial philosophy seminars had a recognisable impact on their participants. They offered them a space

where symbolically substantiated solidarity, stemming from the common pursuit of a morally framed quest, could emerge. Unofficial philosophers also influenced their students' subjectivities, nudging them in various directions – they taught them basic academic skills, inspired them to religious pursuits, and supplied them with non-conformist political thoughts.

To offer the reader a more specific map to my argument, in *Chapter 1*, I offer a critical survey of sociological literature on the topic of intellectuals and establish my analytical framework. I argue that to understand intellectuals, it is necessary to focus on how they present themselves in their performances. Only through attentive analysis of presentation – textual and non-textual – can sociologists understand how intellectuals appear persuasive, charismatic, and acquire respect and awe of their audiences. In this chapter, I also consider Weber's famous concept of charisma. I argue that rather than an innate gift, it is a performatively¹ enacted feature. Finally, I explore the process of boundary-work, by which intellectuals set themselves apart from others, and argue that it is not necessarily driven by prestige and institutional domination, but also by moral motivations.

Chapter 2 then explains my sources and methods. I explore the use of historical ethnography to reconstruct meanings and processes from the past and discuss in depth the use of interviews, Jan Hus Educational Foundation archival documents, and the files of the socialist secret police, as well as the way I analysed them. I focus especially on the challenging ethical dimension of my project, in particular as regards the secret police files, which even three decades after the fall of state socialism remain a sensitive source that can possibly tarnish reputations.

In *Chapter 3* I explore the history of unofficial seminars, perhaps unusually alongside the empirical chapters. However, due to the lack of available literature, mentioned earlier in this introduction, I had to reconstruct this narrative on the basis of my original archival research and interviews. Therefore, this chapter is a historical reconstruction rather than a sociological analysis. Here, it is perhaps worth noticing that I identify the

¹ Throughout the text, I occasionally use variants of 'performative' (or 'performatively') to highlight the meaning-making aspect of an action. In all cases, I am referencing the concept of performance as described by Alexander (2004), not the concept of performative developed by J. L. Austin.

origins of the unofficial seminars already in the early 1960s, in the scene of semi-official activities located at Charles University. I uncover, for example, the so far unresearched and almost completely forgotten Jircháře ecumenical platform, a project which brought together leading Christian and Marxist intellectuals who later organised the unofficial intellectual life. Importantly, this shows that unofficial seminars were not a spontaneous, new phenomenon in Prague's philosophy scene. Rather, they were a continuation of an existent tradition of Czech intellectual life.

Chapter 4 seeks to reconstruct how the secret police and other state forces wilfully undermined trust in the network of non-conformists in Czechoslovakia, and how they instilled fear and paranoia among its actors. As I argue, in order to answer my research questions, especially Research Question 1, concerning people's motivation to participate in these seminars, it is necessary to know in order to understand the difficulty of organising the seminars. This chapter draws especially on the files of the secret police and forms the background puzzle to the phenomenon of unofficial seminars. Given the extent and intensity of police interventions against the non-conformist network, and the variety of strategies they used to isolate individuals from others, tarnish their reputations and credibility, or mislead them, I argue that the network of Czechoslovak non-conformists was fundamentally destabilised. In order to continue existing, it required active performative involvement of figures that could persuasively argue the meaning of political contrarianism.

Having established the precarious nature of the network, *Chapter 5* explores in depth how charisma is enacted in such an unstable and uncertain social world. Drawing mostly on interviews with former unofficial students and seminar conveners, I analyse five examples of prominent members of the unofficial philosophy scene (Jan Patočka, Ladislav Hejdlánek, Daniel Kroupa, Petr Rezek, Julius Tomin) to see what made them appealing as performers. As I argue, there were two main features that their students found as charismatic, their ability to theatrically perform deep, superior knowledge, and their perceived professionalism, which translated into two performative scripts – that of the sage and the taskmaster. Enacting these scripts to various degrees, unofficial philosophers set themselves apart from those who were at official institutions (or from how they themselves described these official philosophers), offering their students experience with what was perceived as actual philosophy in contrast to the ersatz one,

taught at official institutions. This chapter thus answers Research Question 1 by arguing that what propelled people to take part in unofficial philosophy seminars were impressive, charismatic performances of skilled intellectuals.

These performances, however, had to emerge upon some landscape of meanings that would also substantiate the charismatic reading of unofficial performances. Therefore, in the following *Chapter 6*, I proceed to explore the symbolic world of unofficial philosophy, and especially the process of boundary-work by which unofficial intellectuals distinguished themselves from their official counterparts. As I argue here, what emerged from this process was a meaning of philosophy, grounded in phenomenology and theology, as an expression of an inner experience of reality, specifically the experience of hardship under the socialist regime. This reading of philosophy as akin to extraordinary personal ability and a transcendental gift was a symbolic vehicle that reinforced the charismatic nature of their performances and cast the project of unofficial philosophy as both intellectual and moral. This chapter thus answers the second Research Question by reconstructing the meaning of unofficial philosophy.

Finally, *Chapter 7* explores how meanings articulated by effective intellectual performers shape the network of their followers and the impact that these performances have on subjective self-understanding of their audiences. Thus, it answers Research Question 3. In this chapter, I argue that unofficial seminars became a form of a haven for non-conformist actors, allowing them to develop and strengthen ties with other members of the network. Occasionally, they became a source of emancipation and a platform for political protest. But the changes participants underwent were still more profound than just new friendships and solidarity – as all of them recalled that their participation in unofficial seminars was a formative experience in their lives that contributed to their lives becoming what they are now.

To conclude, this dissertation offers an alternative sociological perspective on intellectuals. Contrary to existing accounts, which tend to highlight the role of self-interest, prestige, and power struggle in intellectual life, I propose to see intellectuals through the lens of performance theory, as actors who seek to concoct narratives in a persuasive manner and appropriately to the social context in which their performances

take place. To appreciate this aspect of intellectual life does not necessarily blunt the critical edge of sociological analysis, which, indeed, is one of the benefits of theoretical perspectives such as those of Bourdieu (1990) or Collins (1998). Although I appreciate the individual ability and find it, in fact, crucially important when it comes to intellectuals, what I advocate in my thesis is in no way a return to the ‘great man theory’ of Thomas Carlyle and the like (Carlyle, [1841] 2013). Rather, it is an attempt to offer a more complex perspective on the internal dynamics of intellectual life, one that would be able to explore how intellectuals appeal to their audiences beyond their textual production, which is usually the sole focus of sociological studies of intellectuals.

CHAPTER 1: From Social Dependence to Charismatic
Performance: Towards a Cultural Explanation of Unofficial
Philosophy Seminars

The most primal principle of life is theatrical: the jellyfish in the fairylike-fatal underworld of the sea, the coconut periwigs in the Gothic fan-towers of palms, the fetid head of an embryo at the end of the umbilical cord, jasmine, horseradish, sicknesses: these are all theatrical, colourful, simulating and subterfuges. Not lies, just masks, mimics. That is what history is too; that is the darkest instinct of life.

(Szentkuthy, [1939] 2012: 40)

Writing in 1969, J. P. Nettl observed that the field of the sociology of intellectuals has been, until then, among ‘the most untidy, unsystematic, and controversial areas of inquiry’ (Nettl, 1969: 53). Half a century later, although the field has clearly progressed, Nettl’s words retain some degree of truth. The sociology (or rather sociologies) of intellectuals remain rather marginal within the general discipline and is divided between two approaches. On the one hand, many sociologists emphasise the socio-structural context of idea production and, on the other, there are new contributions that focus on ideational or symbolic factors and their impact on the trajectory and success of individual figures. While there are canonical works, there is no canonical theory or method. Rarely, if ever, does the sociology of intellectuals reach to other sub-fields, or produce works that are consequential. The only thing that truly dissipated seems to be the controversy. Some may even ask: is there a need for specific sociology for intellectuals at all (Monk in Bortolini and Cossu, 2019)?

This chapter offers a critical review of available sociological literature that explores the phenomenon of intellectuals. As I argue, throughout the 20th century, sociologists of intellectuals were dominantly concerned with a social explanation of knowledge production – one that emphasised the embeddedness of new ideas and the movements they inspire in the structure of social relations. Often, this led also to considering intellectuals as a part of a wider, objective social category rather than individually

dispositioned creative producers of ideas. Contrary to the premise that socio-structural context can explain the emergence and success of intellectuals' ideas, I emphasise the possibility of a cultural explanation, one that highlights the role of meanings as primary explananda for unfolding social processes. Returning to the question above, sociologists perhaps do not need a special theory of intellectuals, if by that we mean a theory of how actors struggle over limited employment opportunities and achieve fame in ever-changing discourses. However, what I see as necessary is an approach that is more sensitive to the performative aspect of intellectuals' behaviour while casting them as actors attuned to various moral codes who can inspire followers in both the streets and classrooms. Sociologists of intellectuals need less focus on turf wars, and more on commitment, less on the rational pursuit of prestige and more on the anatomy of interest and attachment.

I base my framework on the theoretical project of the Strong Program in cultural sociology, which combines the insight of structuralism and hermeneutics to deliver a working model of the role of symbolic codes in modern societies. The more recent development of the project provides a framework for understanding individual and collective performances, grounding the abstract cultural system of symbolic structures in real-world social action with both symbolic and social consequences. I highlight, however, a yawning gap in the application of performance theory, which usually focuses on what I call 'spotlight' performances – extraordinary, often large-scale events that unfold under the scrutiny of the media and elicit great interest from members of the relevant publics. While indeed there are intellectuals who enjoy this form of attention, they are the absolute minority. For the most part, intellectual performances occur in routinised shapes and modest spaces such as lecture halls or seminar rooms. Yet, despite their prevalence, these performances receive minimal attention from sociologists.

With regard to the case of Prague's unofficial seminars, I highlight two interconnected aspects of intellectual performance: charisma and boundary-work. Charisma is the performatively constructed appeal of individuals and groups, which may overpower their audiences' sense of social norms and inspire new forms of social action. In the realm of intellectuals, most effective charismatic performances rely on the ability of actors to symbolically distinguish themselves as the producers of an intellectually exclusive and morally superior form of knowledge. I seek to capture this aspect of

charismatic intellectual performance by conceptualising it as a form of boundary-work, which is understood as a negotiation of individual or collective excellence and truthfulness to the fundamentals of the relevant discipline in contrast to others.

Sociological Theories of Academic Intellectuals to Date

This section first reviews the theories of academic intellectuals, emphasising the prominence of social explanation of intellectuals' activity throughout the 20th century. In the second part, I focus on the growing literature that captures intellectuals from what can be described as a cultural perspective, emphasising the processes of meaning-making and the role of ideas in their success or failure. Within each section, I select several particularly relevant authors (Bourdieu and Collins; Gross and Baert) to examine their approach more closely. My ultimate argument is that none of them accounts sufficiently for processes of impressive meaning-making, actual moral commitments beyond pragmatic careerism, and the capacity to spawn a devoted following. As I will argue, such a perspective can be achieved by approaching intellectuals through a theory of performance attuned to both cultural meanings and social processes.

From Classes and Strata to Networks and Fields: The Social Explanation in the Sociologies of Intellectuals

For most of the 20th century, sociologists focused on understanding the phenomenon of intellectuals through the analytical aperture of their location within the structure of social relations. In these accounts, intellectuals were most often seen as an objective category of social actors. More than with intellectuals, therefore, the 20th-century social science was concerned with theorizing various categories of the intelligentsia, the 'aggregate of educated members of one particular stratum or strata' (Sadri, 1994: 69). The main puzzle was the relation of this stratum to social power – how come there are intellectuals who support the status quo as well as those who challenge it?

For Max Weber, the problem of intellectuals was as pervasive a topic as that of rationalisation (Sadri, 1985). Although Weber was famously concerned with the role of

ideas, in his extensive oeuvre he analysed intellectuals primarily as members of a particular group or a type. These were, for example, magicians, prophets (Weber, 1946) or Chinese mandarins (Weber, 1959) who all promulgated and implemented particular forms of rationality by producing interpretations of the world and various ethics (Weber, 1946). Similarly, Robert Michels, in his work on oligarchical tendencies in democracy, approached intellectuals as an internally heterogeneous stratum composed of two classes: ‘those who have succeeded in securing a post at the manger of the state’ and those who ‘have assaulted the fortress without being able to force their way in’ (Michels, 1915: 197). The first, according to Michels, is ‘an army of slaves’ while the second category becomes ‘sworn enemies of the state’ (ibid.).

Class perspective was indeed dominant in the thinking of the Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, who distinguished two categories of intellectuals, traditional and organic (Gramsci, 1989). To answer the question whether intellectuals are an ‘autonomous and independent social group’ or a ‘specialized category’ within groups (Gramsci, 1989: 113), Gramsci argued that, in fact, they are both. First, every social class organically creates ‘one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function’ (Gramsci, 1989: 113) – the organic intellectuals. Organic intellectuals are those individuals who developed the ability of meta-reflection sufficiently enough to understand the role of their class in history. On the other hand, there are traditional intellectuals. These are ‘already in existence and (...) represent a historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms’ (Gramsci, 1989: 114). The pure example of traditional intellectuals is religious clergy. These categories are crucial in the problem of class conflict (and its resolution), as the group that ‘is developing towards dominance’ must ‘struggle to assimilate and to conquer “ideologically” the traditional intellectuals’ by ‘elaborating its own organic intellectuals’ (Gramsci, 1989: 116). Gramsci’s idea was that the working class can win its revolutionary struggle only by producing intellectuals who will endow it with the knowledge of its historical role.

Unlike Gramsci, Karl Mannheim saw intellectuals, following Alfred Weber, as a classless stratum, free-floating or ‘unattached’ (Mannheim, [1929] 2015: 137), which, although emerging from within other strata, maintains distance from economic activity. According to Mannheim, the emancipation of intellectuals ‘determines essentially the

uniqueness of the modern mind, which (...) is rather dynamic, elastic, in a constant state of flux' (Mannheim, [1929] 2015: 139). In analytical terms, nonetheless, this emancipation is the emancipation of a social category, not of an individual intellectual. In his work on conservative thought, Mannheim emphasises the social context of intellectual creation, writing that 'individuals do not create the patterns of thought in terms of which they conceive the world, but take them over from their groups' (Mannheim, [1927] 1971: 261). According to Mannheim, when analysing 'categories of thought' developed by intellectuals, sociologists must be aware that their 'social genesis (...) can be traced to a special type of political activity' (Mannheim, [1927] 1971: 270).

Znaniecki ([1940] 1986) challenged this idea of a strong link between the social domain and that of ideas and argued that sociologists are 'hardly competent to participate' in investigating the latter (Znaniecki, [1940] 1986: 5). What they can and should do, however, is to explore the 'historical existence' of knowledge systems 'in so far as it depends upon the men who construct them, maintain them, or neglect them' (Znaniecki, [1940] 1986: 10). These 'men' are intellectuals, who 'for longer or shorter periods of their lives specialise in cultivating knowledge' (Znaniecki, [1940] 1986: 11). According to Znaniecki, they play the roles of experts, advisers or technologists to the 'men of action', the rulers and politicians. Alternatively, they may be entrusted with the role of sages, who are the sentinels of the society's value system.

Writing in a Durkheimian tone, Shils recast intellectuals again as an objective stratum, this time with 'an unusual sensitivity to the sacred, an uncommon reflectiveness about the nature of their universe, and the rules which govern the society' (Shils, 1958: 5). For Shils, intellectuals are intrinsically tied to the structure of social power in society. They serve it by performing rituals and guarding traditions that maintain the 'moral and intellectual unity of a society' (Shils, 1958: 7). The body of intellectuals grows in proportion to the political ambition and size of the population: 'the larger the society and the more complex the tasks its rulers undertake, the greater the need (...) for a body of religious and secular intellectuals' (Shils, 1958: 6).

According to Coser, similarly, intellectuals are a stratum that expresses 'pronounced concern with the core values of the society' (Coser, 1997: viii). Central to the understanding that highlights social dependence of intellectuals is the emphasis on the

connection of symbols and thought-systems to the structure of power in society. This becomes abundantly clear, for example, when Coser writes that:

it was only after the rigid edifice of medieval society broke down; after nominalism, the Reformation, and the Renaissance had fragmented the unified world view of the Church (...) that men of ideas began to find conditions favourable to the emergence of a self-conscious stratum of intellectuals. (Coser, 1997: xix)

In other words, without social change and erosion or even destruction of the centre of power and the subsequent transformation of its internal structure, intellectuals are unable to produce new types of ideas. Clearly, ideas can be explained only by the social and political context in which they emerged.

The tendency towards social explanation is clear also in Lipset's and Dobson's analysis of contrarian tendencies of American and Soviet intellectuals (Lipset and Dobson, 1972). Here, the authors argue that the role of critics has been historically popular with intellectuals, and remained so also during the Cold War. The difference is that while 'Americans seek the end of (...) the war in Vietnam, the expansion of egalitarian opportunity, and the reform of the political system' (Lipset and Dobson, 1972: 159), Soviet intellectuals strive for 'basic rights and establishing the rule of law' (ibid.). To explain intellectual contrarianism, the authors do not explore how these ideas emerged, spread, and what made them so popular, but rather look for 'the attributes of the social structure' that 'contribute to the formation of such critical intelligentsia' (Lipset and Dobson, 1972: 159). They find the answer in the expansion of intelligentsia in post-industrial society and at the same time elevated competition for ever scarcer positions and prestige, resulting in 'a more influential, though more alienated stratum' (Lipset and Dobson, 1972: 160) of intellectuals.

Bauman's work on intellectuals (1989) analysed two fundamental positions of intellectuals, that of legislators and interpreters, which are linked to two epistemological positions or two different forms of 'understanding the world, and the social world in particular' (1989: 3), modernity and post-modernity. As Bauman argues, very much in line with what I called social explanation, the concept of intellectuals emerged when 'the power/knowledge syndrome, a most conspicuous attribute of modernity, had been set' (Bauman, 1989: 2). In modernity, intellectuals assume the role of legislators, which

‘consists of making authoritative statements which arbitrate in controversies of opinions and which select those opinions which, having been selected, become correct and binding’ (Bauman, 1989: 4). Post-modern intellectuals, on the other hand, are interpreters involved in ‘translating statements, made within one communally based tradition, so that they can be understood within the system of knowledge based on another tradition’ (Bauman, 1989: 5). They do not possess the only true understanding, such as the modern intellectuals, but rather mediate various positions in increasingly complex societies. For Bauman, intellectuals are also to be seen through the lens of their relation to the power and the complexity of the social structure. This dependence is abundantly clear in Bauman’s treatment of East-Central European intellectuals (1987). Here, Bauman writes that the conflict between the Communist Party and the intellectuals can be seen as a ‘disagreement over the distribution of surplus product, particularly the intellectual’s share’ as the ‘general lowering of living standards has dealt a particularly bitter blow to the intelligentsia’ (Bauman, 1987: 179).

In other words, for much of the 20th century, sociologists were puzzled by the question of the role that this extraordinary stratum (that they themselves seem to belong to), and that seems to be paid (or aspiring to be paid) for mere thinking, has in the maintenance of social order – or, on the other hand, in the instigation of social change. In some works which were inspired by the growth of technocracy in the second half of the 20th century, intellectuals themselves are on the path to become the dominant class. Konrád and Szelényi, for example, saw intellectuals as moving collectively towards the acquisition of central power in society (Konrad and Szelenyi, 1979). This is true indeed also of Gouldner, who wrote about ‘the new class of intellectuals and intelligentsia’ which ‘pursues its class interests’ and, like ‘other subordinate classes (...) attempts to better its position’ (Gouldner, 1979: 12). The ways of their thinking were always rooted in the ‘conditions general’ of their life in society, such as their craving for ‘high status’ (Lipset, 1959: 464) which forced intellectuals to serve the power or to revolt against it.

This sociological trend culminates in the work of Pierre Bourdieu who identified intellectuals as the ‘dominated fractions within the dominant class’ (Bourdieu, 1984: 186) and famously analysed the dynamics of French academic field in *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu, 1990). Here, Bourdieu deploys his influential framework of social distinction and reproduction, relying on the conceptual toolbox of field and

habitus, to understand the relation between power and knowledge in the institutionalised, excessively hierarchised French educational system. For Bourdieu, the life of academic intellectuals is largely about the maintenance of prestige and influence, guarding the status quo by ‘selection and indoctrination’ (Bourdieu, 1990: 40) of students, and forming coalitions in the face of changing external conditions such as growing student body or political transformations.

The general problem with Bourdieu’s work is that he relies on his criticised deterministic model of habitus, which links ideas and behaviour directly to the socio-economic background of the actor. According to Alexander, the concept of habitus as ‘unconscious strategy’ is inherently flawed as *contradictio in adiecto* – strategy is by definition conscious, reflexive and voluntary, and cannot be conceived of as ‘unconscious’ (Alexander, 1995). But more importantly, Bourdieu’s sociology of academic intellectuals offers a very power-oriented and prestige-obsessed interpretation of the academic world. Indeed, this is perhaps partially a result of the empirical case of French academia, a notoriously stratified environment concentrated in prestigious institutions such as the *Grandes Écoles*. This pragmatic framework attuned to domination loses from its sight the phenomena such as interpersonal solidarity, convergence and conflict over meanings rather than status, or the individual as a creative and motivated social agent (Gross, 2008).

Despite these shortcomings, Bourdieusian approach to intellectuals remains popular among sociologists (Kauppi, 2019; Stampnitzky, 2011; Steinmetz, 2017). There are good reasons for this, in particular the concept of the field, which Bourdieu uses as both a metaphor and a conceptual tool for analysing the space of interrelated social positions and the possibilities that actors have in assuming them. If used cautiously with regard to possible determinism of the Bourdieusian edifice (i.e. without direct links between cultural production and economic capital and social structure), the field can be a tool that productively highlights the way in which cultural products are shaped by their interrelatedness.

A more recent contribution that similarly emphasises the embeddedness of intellectuals in the system of social relations but pays insufficient attention to the role of cultural structures and individually developed ability of effective meaning-making, is the

monumental *Sociology of Philosophies* by Collins (1998). Collins' contribution is important for more than just the admirable erudition and width of scope, which covers much of the history of philosophy. In this theory of intellectual change, the author converged the insight from his neo-Durkheimian work (Collins, 1975) with network theory (e.g. Camic, 1992). According to Collins, the intellectual world conforms to the 'law of small numbers' (Collins, 1998: 38), meaning that at any given time there can be only three to six dominant intellectual schools. These schools are distinguished by the density of their intellectual networks, with their 'inner structure' being the force that 'shapes ideas' (Collins, 1998: 2), as well as the frequency of 'interaction rituals', a concept borrowed from Goffman (Goffman, [1967] 2005). These rituals charge individuals with emotional energy, which Collins defines as 'the surge of creative impulse that comes upon intellectuals or artists' and charges them with 'the physical strength to work long periods of time' (Collins, 1998: 34). Only those who are connected to the most active and dense networks and hence draw the most emotional energy, will achieve lasting intellectual success.

Collins' contribution lies especially in his compact yet powerful theoretical model (McLaughlin, 1998) which illuminates the dynamics of intellectual creativity as underpinned by their engagement in real or imagined networks. He is undoubtedly right in that emotions are profoundly involved in the process of intellectual creativity – albeit intellectuals often strive to deny such investments in their texts – as well as in that these emotions occur through interactions. Moreover, his work is an admirable exercise in sociological analysis of long-term historical processes, in which he demonstrates how social ties forged through ritual and ritual-like processes influence – over a timespan of centuries – the shape of our knowledge.

Nonetheless, there are several weak points in Collins' theorizing. First, a specific conceptual issue concerns the inconsistent definition of emotional energy, Collins' central concept. While emotional energy enables actors to labour for extended periods of time and accumulates in human bodies (Collins, 1998: 14), it also somehow 'flows around the network, collecting in intense pools here and there' (Collins, 1998: 49). At times, it even seems to acquire some form of agency and 'selects the symbols which give one an optimal sense of group membership' (ibid.). In other words, emotional energy is not a consistent metaphor, let alone a well-developed concept.

More importantly, however, as McLaughlin argues ‘Collins draws a picture of intellectuals as self-interested, calculating status climbers’ interested purely in ‘eminence and financial security’ (McLaughlin, 2000: 171). Similar in this respect to Bourdieu, Collins obliterates the role of symbols, meaning-making processes and cultural or inter-personal allure that play, however, a fundamental role in intellectual life. He remains entirely oblivious to intellectuals’ ability to achieve success through production and promulgation of effectively narrated ideas, facilitated further by individually their ability to recast themselves as specific personas and entice a following that will spread the word of their excellence. This focus leads Collins to extremes, such as claiming in his discussion of Wittgenstein that the philosopher’s eccentric ‘personality *was* his network position’ (Collins, 1998: 736), without ruminating on the possibility that it may have been the other way around – that it was Wittgenstein’s acumen displayed in disruptive performances that facilitated fragmentation in his vicinity. Because Collins does not appreciate these aspects of intellectual success, he also does not offer any tools to analyse intellectual failure. In his theory, interaction rituals always reliably deliver the dose of emotional energy. As Smith recently noted, however, the benefits of participation in rituals are not so simple and the practical and bureaucratic costs of being a key figure in the network may often outweigh the benefits (Smith, 2014).

To summarize, this section brought together some crucial contributions of social theorists towards understanding the phenomenon of intellectuals. Throughout the 20th century, as I argued, the dominant approach relied on the social explanation and neglected symbolic processes and meaning-making in favour of a socio-structural context of their forms of thought and success. Rather than about intellectuals, sociologists often wrote about the intelligentsia as the generally educated stratum of society. Moving towards the end of the 20th century, Bourdieu and Collins developed two particularly strong explanatory frameworks, which, although offering a relatively nuanced understanding of processes within the intellectual ‘field’ or ‘networks’ cast intellectuals as fundamentally competing over turfs in relatively institutionalised academic environments and detached from the matter of their work, which is ideas, indifferent to any appeal other than prestige (linked to financial/economic wellbeing). The next section surveys the more recent contributions to the sociology of intellectuals

which, in contrast with the previous approaches, emphasise cultural explanation by rooting the processes constituting intellectual life in meaning-making and meaning-managing practices. As I argue, despite considerable development, the sociology of intellectuals still lacks sufficient understanding of those performance processes that are both non-textual and non-spectacular, such as teaching, convening, debating or lecturing.

From Identity to Performance: Towards a Cultural Explanation of Intellectual Life

In recent years, the field of the sociology of intellectuals absorbed fruitful new tendencies from the general discipline, especially its turn towards the meaning-centred cultural approach. This includes perspectives that highlight processes by which intellectuals establish the understanding of their own identity as well as those that focus on processes of articulation and performance of meanings. It is particularly the latter trend that I find the most productive. As I note in this section, however, this research vein so far did not integrate the developments in performance theory sufficiently enough to account for intellectual performances that are not purely textual, and do not occur in the spotlight of public or media attention.

An important recent contribution to the field of the sociology of intellectuals that highlights the role of culture in shaping intellectuals is offered by Neil Gross as an integral part of his biography of the American philosopher Richard Rorty (Gross, 2008). In analysing Rorty's life, Gross takes a cue from his earlier work on the 'new sociology of ideas' (Camic and Gross, 2001). Here, together with Camic, Gross sought to break with some of the trends I have criticised above, such as understanding intellectuals as a special social category, a tendency that results in effacing 'variation among specialised knowledge producers' (Camic and Gross, 2001: 242) and treating ideas as secondary to social structures (Camic and Gross, 2001: 238).

In Rorty's biography, Gross draws attention particularly to the way in which intellectuals understand themselves and construe their mission in the world, and how this 'intellectual self-concept' (Gross, 2008: xii) influences their actions. The notion of intellectual self-concept, in Gross' words, is designed to explore how 'intellectuals tell

themselves and others stories about who they are' and 'their distinctive interests, dispositions, values, capacities, and tastes' (Gross, 2008: 263). Intellectuals acquire their self-concept from motley sources in their socio-cultural environment, at first often represented by the closest family. What Gross sees as particularly important is their institutional setting. Similarly to Collins, Gross draws on neo-Durkheimian sociology to argue that 'every social group, regardless of scale, certain ideas, symbols, objects, and practices will be culturally coded as sacred and worthy of veneration' (Gross, 2008: 279) and 'thinkers move across the life course and are affiliated with different institutions, they may pick up from some of them identity elements that they integrate into their self-concept narratives' (Gross, 2008: 279). This emergent self-concept then profoundly structures the further direction of intellectuals' work and life-trajectory.

Gross' theory offers an interesting link between the ethos of specific institutions and individual action. The author overcomes the problem of social determinism by emphasising the role that symbols and ideas play in structuring an individual's understanding of their role in life and thus influencing their intellectual trajectory. What is less clear, however, is how the 'intellectual self-concept' reaches beyond the notion of social identity. Indeed, intellectuals think about themselves 'qua intellectuals' (Gross, 2008: 279) but this self-concept is a part of a whole nexus of their social identity, which is performatively enacted on an everyday basis and includes much more than just declarative knowledge expressed in 'autobiographical statements, essays, interviews, correspondence' (Camic and Gross, 2001: 274), which Gross suggests as central documents for studying the self-concept.

More importantly, however, while the notion of self-concept is perhaps capable of capturing dynamics of individual development and life-trajectory, it explains relatively little about the success of intellectuals and their ideas. Gross persuasively argues that 'while Rorty's identity as an metaphysician made him look somewhat suspicious in the eyes of Harvard, the same identity rendered him appealing to professors at Yale' (Gross, 2008: 301) and guaranteed his admission. Although this is a success in its own right, it hardly measures up to Rorty's eventual intellectual fame. What was the relation between celebrity and intellectual self-concept? Unfortunately, Gross circumvents the question of why particular symbols, thought-systems and figures associated with them acquire special positions within institutions and entice students and followers. He

concludes the biography a full quarter-century before Rorty's death and thus avoids the explaining why this particular philosopher outgrew the ranks of a common Princeton professor. The author, therefore, leaves us with a theory that says that intellectuals accomplish certain goals because they think of themselves as actors who should be doing them – and by that, they appeal to other actors who feel similarly. Gross does not explore why some individuals are better or worse in doing these things, or what is their impact. While highlighting the ability of individuals to integrate ideas from their socio-cultural surroundings and institutional context and orient their actions accordingly, Gross remains entrenched within the limits of the 'idea that the sociological study of intellectuals should focus mainly, if not exclusively, on the structural factors that explain why certain ideas or interventions came into being' (Baert and Morgan, 2018: 2).

Recently, this trend was confronted by Patrick Baert in another sociological biography of a successful philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre (Baert, 2015). Taking a very different approach than Gross, Baert explores the puzzle of Jean-Paul Sartre's sudden success in post-war France. To capture the phenomenon of intellectual success, Baert develops the theory of 'positioning', a term borrowed from Rom Harré (e.g. Davies and Harré, 1990), to describe how every intervention in the intellectual realm 'locates the author(s) or speaker(s) within the intellectual field or within a broader socio-political or artistic arena' (Baert, 2015: 166). At the same time, by acts of positioning, intellectuals also situate others 'possibly depicting them as allies in a similar venture, predecessors of a similar orientation or alternatively as intellectual opponents' (Baert, 2015: 166). In other words, intellectuals situate themselves in the discourse by publishing books or articles, as well as participating in clubs and events, allying themselves with particular trends and veins of thinking, bidding and arguing against others. Their success is contingent on how their particular position resonates with their various audiences. According to Baert, Sartre was successful because he assumed a particular position within a society that was hungry for explanations that he was intellectually well-equipped to deliver.

Baert's explanatory framework is strong and, importantly, emphasises the role of ideas as well as the individually structured ability to deliver them. Nonetheless, several links are missing. Importantly, Baert relies on the idea of resonance, writing that in the example of Sartre, 'his positioning in 1945 'fitted' the context and contributed to his

success, just as other forms of positioning which had been successful in the past (...) were no longer appreciated' (Baert, 2015: 166). In other words, ideas go in and out of fashion, pleasing the audiences that are primed to accept them by their particular sociocultural climate. When society changes, their fame dissipates. This raises two problems. First, Baert's work suggests that intellectuals are actors who seek to successfully answer the questions that are implicit in the zeitgeist. In fact, however, they are those who formulate these questions and diagnose the sociocultural climate. They must do this persuasively enough and in a manner that is appealing and palatable to their audiences. The second important question that Baert's theoretical edifice leaves out is that of general cultural logic in the works that succeed and the way in which their authors present their ideas. Can any work become successful or is it possible to identify the internal logic of ideas by which they appeal to intellectuals' audiences?

The questions of successful production and enactment of ideas are at the centre of the proposals for a new approach to the sociology of intellectuals initiated by several sociologists associated with the Strong Program project in cultural sociology (Alexander, 2016; Bartmanski, 2012; Eyerman, 2011). These works highlight the role of intellectuals as producers of ideas that are fundamental for the way in which communities understand their own role in wider historical narratives. At the same time, they pay attention to the individual ability of intellectuals to create these ideas and persuasively enact them in front of their audiences.

In his work, Eyerman challenges conventional understanding of intellectuals as a distinct category (Eyerman, 2011). Instead, he conceives of the intellectual 'as embracing the performance of social role, one which involves the articulation of ideas communicated to a broad audience through a range of media and forums with the aim of influencing public opinion' (Eyerman, 2011: 454). Specifically, Eyerman highlights the place of intellectuals in articulating cultural traumas. They are the actors who 'draw from a generally available yet often culturally specific reservoir of frameworks and story lines in providing their account of an occurrence' (Eyerman, 2011: 457). They transform the occurrence into an 'event of significance well beyond the local' (ibid.).

Bartmanski explores the phenomenon of 'intellectual icons' (Bartmanski, 2012) or, in other words, figures who become identified as the lynchpins in the history of their

fields. According to Bartmanski, the process of iconization is the ‘construction of symbolic authority that brings cultural resonance’ (Bartmanski, 2012: 428), modelled by three fundamental factors: charismatic process, liminal times, and effective coding of the sacred/profane binary. As he argues, iconic intellectuals are those ‘who aspire to make bold, often emancipatory statements about the human condition, some explicitly (e.g. Arendt), others more subtly (e.g. Habermas). They invariably wish to extend “human freedom” as they broaden our knowledge’ (Bartmanski, 2012: 432). They must propose these programs in an appealing way and, importantly, in historical moments that have ‘a degree of intellectual confusion and a corresponding openness to guidance’ (Bartmanski, 2012: 431). Bartmanski demonstrates the construction of iconicity on two 20th century intellectuals, Michel Foucault and Bronislaw Malinowski. He argues that it was their ‘contempt for routinization’ in their performances (Bartmanski, 2012: 442) as well as the ‘institutional and material circumstances’ (Bartmanski, 2012: 449), such as the powerful universities that supported them, which resulted in their elevation to the position of iconicity. I find this approach particularly interesting thanks to its emphasis on both the performative and the macro-cultural aspects of intellectual success.

Drawing on his earlier theoretical works on cultural codes (Alexander and Smith, 1993), intellectuals (Alexander, 1995) and performance theory (Alexander, 2004), Alexander elaborates the process of coding of the sacred/profane binary among intellectuals, and highlights its function as the cultural logic driving the success of intellectual performances. Similarly to Baert, Alexander argues against the prevalent focus on ‘non-ideational circumstances that the creators of ideas find themselves in’ (Alexander, 2016: 342). Rather than socio-cultural conditions, he proposes to focus on the symbolic structure of the intellectual performance, in particular, the manner in which intellectuals ‘define the binaries of good and evil’ (Alexander, 2016: 344). According to Alexander, intellectual success is dependent on their ability to ‘identify contemporary social arrangements as dangerous and polluting and conjure up utopian alternatives, antidotes to purify or save’ (Alexander, 2016: 344). As more recent research highlights, however, these narratives achieve even greater success if they conform also to other requirements, such as openness to interdisciplinary use (Bortolini and Cossu, 2019).

I find this emerging vein of understanding intellectuals founded on the premise of the Strong Program to be the most fruitful development in the field of sociologies of

intellectuals. Its strength lies in the de-essentialisation of the notion of intellectuals, achieved by highlighting the importance of cultural roles and scripts (Eyerman, 2011). Second, it draws attention to the processes unfolding within the relatively autonomous sphere of ideas and symbols. Intellectuals are more than just purely rational, profit-oriented, and prestige-seeking actors addicted to the ‘intellectual/emotional cocaine’ (Smith, 2014: 248) of emotional energy and oblivious to any symbolic content or moral charge of the narratives they encounter.

Nonetheless, there are numerous lacunae in the current state of performance theories of intellectuals. In particular, the field remains neglectful of the fundamental processes of intellectual activity that are, at least on the outside, routinised and ordinary, yet absolutely indispensable to the functioning of what, with Bourdieu, we can call the intellectual field. The Strong Program remains focused on performances such as books (Alexander, 2016; Bartmanski, 2012) or articles (Eyerman, 2011), often with the implicit focus on actors such as Sartre or Foucault who ‘appeared as a hero at mass rallies, wrote columns for newspapers, and spoke eloquently on the radio’ (Alexander, 2016: 347). While events like speeches, conferences, book launches or books themselves take the central position in the world of academic intellectuals, most of their social lives are spent at lectures, seminars or debates. Collins is right when he highlights the role of interaction rituals, but he fails to see that these events are usually performances delivered by individuals or groups who bid their interpretations of reality against that of their audiences. Their success depends on the ability of participants to present themselves in a particular light, to persuade their audiences that a particular perspective is indeed the worthiest, to demonstrate to them ways in which they could or should approach veritable figures of their chosen discipline. It is through these encounters that people come to be seen as intellectuals, acquire a reputation, and formulate or polish their ideas. To understand how some intellectuals assemble ‘a priestly core group’ (Alexander, 2016: 347) of followers and exercise their influence in everyday life, it is necessary to take a step down from the level of iconicity and explore the seemingly mundane processes such as teaching and debating, which, nonetheless, are central to intellectual success.

In the following section, I will introduce the framework of cultural pragmatics, exploring its potential to illuminate the mid-level everyday performances that were so

far neglected. Further, I will discuss the concept of charismatic performance and link it to the symbolic labour of boundary-work, by which intellectuals negotiate and argue their noetic as well as moral superiority over others. The goal is to establish a functional approach to exploring how intellectuals act in front of their audiences, what creates their success among peers or students, and what are the potential outcomes of performances. I believe that such an approach will shed more light on the nature of intellectual appeal and authority in detail rather than in a broad-brush manner, which would lump individuals into objective categories. This performance approach is particularly important in order to understand non-conformist milieus, such as the Czechoslovak unofficial philosophy scene, which are underpinned by very little formal or bureaucratic obligations or possible advantages – in other words, situations when people listen to intellectuals because they want to, not because they have to or are promised to get something out of it.

The Strong Program Approach: From Discourse to Performance

The foundational principle of the Strong Program's cultural sociology is the notion of analytical autonomy of culture (Alexander and Smith, 2001). Contra what Alexander and Smith term 'weak programs' or sociologies of culture, which understand cultural forms and meanings as a dependent variable that is to be explained by a reference to the structures of social or economic life, they emphasise the explanatory potential of meanings, constituting thus a distinct cultural sociological approach. Culture, according to Alexander and Smith (1993), is a relatively independent force which can be analytically disentangled from other structures and processes in social life and identified as the driving force behind social, economic or political processes rather than their consequence.

The Strong Program approach emerged as a program attuned primarily to discourse analysis, dovetailing the insight of Saussurean structuralism and the classical discipline of hermeneutics. Drawing on the structuralist understanding of language, Alexander and Smith conceptualise cultural systems as systems of meanings structured according to the principle of binary oppositions. These oppositions are rendered through cultural codes based on the fundamental Durkheimian distinction between the sacred and the profane

(Alexander and Smith, 2001). Therefore, it is possible to identify, for example, a distinct cultural code of American civil society (Alexander and Smith, 1993; Jacobs and Sobieraj, 2007) as well as those of non-democratic societies (Smith, 1998). These general codes indeed do not influence merely the realm of political negotiation, but profoundly shape also other discourses, such as that of various art worlds (McCormick, 2015; McKernan, 2018).

The Strong Program, therefore, builds on an understanding of culture as supplying normative commitments (Alexander and Smith, 1993: 152) that motivate social action. While indeed not extensible to all action, social actors are often prompted to act by more than expected loss or profit in terms of financial gain or prestige. In the spirit of Weber's *wertrational* action, they are often animated by beliefs which are not strictly calculative. More recently, the Strong Program fruitfully implemented insight from the theory of performance and developed a theory of cultural pragmatics to elaborate the process by which these meanings are enacted in the social world and actors both deliver and access meanings that become such commitments. This theory also allows for a more pragmatic interpretation of social world in which meanings are not only articulated with normative commitment in mind, but they can be also deployed pragmatically with a vision of practical success and audience persuasion.

In the theory of cultural pragmatics, Alexander defines performance as 'the social process by which actors, individually or in concert, display for others the meaning of their social situation' (Alexander, 2004: 529). In terms of the meaning-making process, this display is not limited to verbal narrative representation – it may include also aesthetic, kinetic or aural elements. The ultimate goal of performance is to persuade social actors who witness it about the importance and genuineness of the enacted meanings. This is clearly important in the lives of intellectuals, especially academic intellectuals, who routinely perform in front of audiences which they seek to persuade about their interpretations of particular problems and make them believe that they too are a part of some imagined disciplinary lineage.

The Elements of Performance

Alexander (2004) identifies six ‘elements’ that must be aligned for the performance to succeed:

I. Systems of collective representation refer to the symbols and codes that inspire, structure and are deployed in performances. Although these representations tend to be verbal, this may not be necessary – often, they can be visual or musical/aural. Alexander distinguishes two levels of representations:

- (a) Background symbols are the central symbols representing the community’s core values and underlying ideas that structure the rules and norms of collective life within the particular milieu. In the realm of intellectuals, such an underlying idea may be that of integrity and originality, which prevents (or is supposed to prevent) individuals from appropriating the work of others, misrepresenting the data, etc. One such set of core values, described famously by Merton, is the quadruple of communalism, universalism, disinterestedness, and organised scepticism (Merton, 1979).
- (b) Foreground scripts, which are the immediate instantiations of these background symbols. They are the particular ways and wordings of performance drawn from the repertoires of symbolic expressions accessible to individuals or collectives. Among intellectuals, foreground scripts are the texts of performances themselves: the matter that constitutes their speeches, books, articles, or presentations, and the way this content is enacted.

II. Actors put them into action, encoding background symbols into immediate scripts. They are the walking and talking beings who, either physically or via media, stand before their audiences and deliver the performance. Usually, it is also actors who select the forms given to the symbolic representations. While among intellectuals actors are usually individual, this may not always be so – they may act both individually and in concert. The eventual success or failure of the performance owes a great deal to their ability to successfully project these symbols and persuade other actors about the veracity of their message. Indeed, it is necessary to note that actors seldom have absolute control over their performance. Surprising conjunctures occur, speeches are misunderstood and misread. With regard to the topic of this thesis, Karl Marx is an apt

example of an intellectual whose performances and written works were systematically misread by devoted audiences.

III. Audiences refer to the Others of the performance, the observers who decode the deployed symbolic content. According to Alexander, the success of performance lies in the ability to inspire ‘psychological identification’ (Alexander, 2004: 531) of the audience with the symbolic representations conveyed in the performance. The receptiveness of the audience to the message then hinges on a complex nexus of variables, some of which may prevent actors from ever delivering a successful performance. For example, in societies with deep-seated racial, gender, or class power imbalance, it may be impossible for actors to overcome these distinctions and draw a sympathetic ear to their cause. Sociologists analysing performance must, therefore, be attentive to the social and cultural dispositions and the structure of the audience. This is indeed true of intellectuals, whether they address an unseen and removed audience (or even posterity) through a mediated performance (such as textual intervention) or a seminar room at their university or – as in the case of unofficial philosophers – their flat. Yet, in both examples, it is clear how crucial for the success of the performance is the dynamics of the audience. In the case of the imaginary audience, the potential lack of interest or hostility of some may not be detrimental to the general success of the performances. In a graduate seminar, however, one or two disruptive students could jeopardize the meeting.

IV. The means of symbolic production refer, according to Alexander, to the ‘mundane material things’ (Alexander, 2004: 532) that actors need for their symbolic projection. Grand political campaigns, for example, require actors (and their teams) to have access to substantial financial resources that allow them to purchase, access or lease facilities or spaces that afford the best possible outreach to the audience. Nonetheless, one dysfunctional detail such as amplifier failure (or a lost key to the seminar room) can throw the performance off its balance and thwart its success.

The means of symbolic production – especially those such as spaces and places – are indeed part of the entire meaning-making process. Different halls or arenas, for example, might be endowed with different meanings and provoke different associations of prestige or lineage in actors and audiences. To refer to the world of intellectuals, it is

very different to deliver a lecture in the main theatre of a great university than in a shabby room of a local college. In some cases, there are even marquee events with an added layer of iconicity, for example the Edinburgh University's Gifford Lectures, to which only a select few are invited. Indeed, the means of production are anything but mundane, as they actively participate in the result of the performance.

Venues and technical equipment are the most obvious means of symbolic production. Yet, it is possible to go further and argue that the means of symbolic production are also the resources that are symbolic themselves. Language is perhaps the best example of a symbolic resource for intellectuals. While in the digital age actors take access to any form of parlance or theory for granted, in eras and situations such as that discussed in this thesis, such means of symbolic production were unavailable or heavily controlled. To have access to such means of symbolic production, and the ability to manipulate them, may itself be an impressive feat that contributes to the success of intellectual performances.

V. Mise-en-scène is then the way in which the 'dramatic social action' (McCormick, 2015: 26) brings performance to life. Successful performance is a matter of deploying the right symbols by the right means as much as the choreography that feeds the charismatic aura exuded by the actor and the ability to enact pre-existing scripts relevant to the role assumed in the performance. *Mise-en-scène* refers to the particular manner in which the actor/s engage the ideational and material resources in the particular moment, including an exhibition of embodied knowledge and the manner in which various meaningful aspects of the scene are aesthetically aligned together in real time. Intellectuals, of course, are also actors who act according to existing scripts and rules of behaviour. While one could perhaps get by with enacting the terrified doctoral student during a conference panel, this script might fail in other settings, such as lecturing to an undergraduate course.

VI. Social power is an element that refers to the 'distribution of power in society' (Alexander, 2004: 532) and the way in which it influences performance. In some cases, actors may simply be unable to enact performances due to the inveterately unjust distribution of social power, which impacts their ability to claim necessary resources (material and symbolic). Without sufficient social power, actors may find it impossible

to negotiate the use of space and technological means or, sometimes, the very official permit that may – in some societies – be a requirement for public acts. For intellectuals, social power may, for example, stem from their association with an institution. Indeed, intellectuals employed by universities enjoy certain social power which allows them to set research agendas, acquire resources (for example apply for funding), and enjoy opportunities which others without institutional support do not have.

Of course, power has also symbolic dimensions. People with degrees from and/or positions at prestigious (even iconic) institutions are often taken as having a greater authority in their subjects and a greater legitimacy to speak on various topics, which sometimes seeps through their texts. The same goes for those associated with important intellectual figures, the students and collaborators who have the authority to be the exegetes of their masters. Another possible symbolic source of social power can be, in some cases, a connection with a dignified intellectual lineage or a social movement.

According to Alexander, a performance is successful only if it effectively fuses these six elements mentioned above. Originally, Alexander argues, in the pre-modern societies, the elements were fused quite effortlessly, as performances often took explicitly ritual, being both scripted and routinised, and the fusion of the elements was guaranteed by traditional patterns of collective behaviour. With the growing complexity of human social structure, however, the elements are becoming progressively disconnected and difficult to align. In a thesis that touches upon the topic of social lives of philosophers, it is perhaps fitting to note that the discipline itself likely played a role in the diffusion of these elements in ancient Greece, with intellectuals such as Thales replacing ‘gods imagined in human form or personifications with physical elements or abstract principles’ and abandoning ‘the idea that cosmic events are brought about by gods’ (Graf, 1993: 98)

The question now is – what happens when performance succeeds? According to Alexander, successful performance ensues in ritual-like effect (Alexander, 2004: 537) which ‘energizes the participants and attaches them to each other’ (Alexander, 2004: 527). Furthermore, it ‘increases their identification with the symbolic objects of communication, and intensifies the connection of the participants and the symbolic objects with the observing audience’ (ibid.). This focus on mere social cohesion and

perpetuation of symbolic structures, however, understates the transformative potential of successful performances.

Indeed, the role of the ritual effect of the performance is hardly negligible. In his well-known analysis of Aboriginal totemism, Durkheim emphasised the role of rituals in the sustenance of collective life. According to Durkheim, ‘moral remaking can be achieved only through meetings, assemblies, and congregations, in which individuals, pressing close to one another, reaffirm their common sentiments’ (Durkheim, [1912] 1995: 430). Through signs of shared focus and mood (Collins, 2005), members of the audience converge in a community, confirming thus their individual belonging in this social body that cherishes its sacred symbols, and continually maintaining their sacredness.

At the same time, the ritual-like effect of performances is also transformative on the individual, social, and cultural levels. Successful performances – depending on their particular structure – are not merely cohesive but also integrative. By joining the crowd of observers and sharing appreciation, understanding and judgment (Wohl, 2015), individuals may establish new ties and enter new networks. Participation in the audience and its internal interactions may, therefore, be a gateway into the community. In other words, actors who participate in intellectual performances such as lectures may become persuaded about the noetic excellence of the presenter and enter communication with others in the audience through a collective expression of approval or debate, and establish new friendships. Indeed, it is not necessary to see these friendships in a positive light. They may grow into political or personality cults, or sometimes dense networks in which some members provide institutional support to their peers at the expense of actors who do not belong in their circle.

Performers are not mere reiterators of available symbolic content, although, in some cases, repetition may be required by the overall genre of the event. They often creatively invent and re-invent existing symbolic patterns, devise metaphors, parallels and examples – indeed, in milieus such as the world of academic intellectuals, inventiveness is prized (Guetzkow et al., 2004). Far from only confirming existing content, social performance may be a moment in which new symbols and meanings emerge through creative recombination and interpretation. The success of these meanings is then

contingent on the ability of the performer to deliver an appealing spiel, control the situation, and the presence of an attentive and attuned audience.

The introduction of new meanings, sometimes even entire social or cultural ontologies, may engender solidarity as well as the emergence of social or symbolic rifts. The common examples would be indeed performances that devise and promulgate racial differences or social conflict and that, throughout the 19th and 20th century, contributed to processes that profoundly shaped societies, cultures, and political regimes throughout the world. This, indeed, is true also of performances that proposed the abolishment of such rifts (think Martin Luther King). In the world of academic intellectuals, however, the problems over which social actors delineate their collectivities tend to be more subtle. Often, they include particular interpretations of topics or phenomena, even disagreement over methods – in other words, problems very irrelevant to anybody without some degree of relevant training.

To summarize, therefore, in these two sections, I have introduced the Strong Program approach to sociology, a research program that highlights the primacy of meanings in social processes and analytical autonomy of cultural structures. I have further explored the more recent incarnation of the program into a theory of performance and discussed the internal mechanics of performance and the effects of its potential success. The performance theory offers a fine-grained approach to the phenomenon of intellectuals which permits a form of analysis that is attentive both to the ideational structures that intellectuals concoct and influence that these performances have on social relations. Referring back to my research questions, performance theory allows me to address both symbolic structures, the way in which they were delivered, and their impact.

The next section emphasises a tendency in the literature on performance, which favours what I term ‘spotlight’ performances – extraordinary ritual-like events – over seemingly routinised and mundane events. Sociologists such as Bartmanski (2012) emphasised the role of such large performances at prestigious venues in the construction of intellectual iconicity. However, I argue that iconicity begins in the classroom. Events such as lecturing, tutoring or discussing, which are prominent in the world of academic intellectuals, are also performances. They are meaning-making processes that rely on the capacity of the performer to deliver consistent narrativization of symbolic structures

and an attentive audience. If successful, they may spawn collectives of followers persuaded about the veracity of these narratives, and sometimes also about the utmost excellence of the performer.

Ordinary Performances in Extraordinary Times

Until now, cultural pragmatics theory was used to analyse cases linked by one particular feature. They are instances of high-profile events, events that draw public attention and put individuals or groups in the spotlight. Often, these events are extraordinary situations, which break with the dullness and predictability of everyday life. Such events (or chains of events) are political campaigns in the US (Alexander, 2011), music competitions (McCormick, 2015), rebellious movements (Reed, 2013), or high-brow cultural production (Larsen, 2016). When it comes to intellectuals, even events such as publishing papers, launching books, or giving speeches (Baert, 2015) are relatively extraordinary.

These acts unfold, in Goffmanian parlance (Goffman, 1983), on the front stages of social life. They are highly scripted events with extraordinary potential to endow actors with significant prestige and even alter their trajectories altogether by awarding them with an enduring celebrity or political power. They put the actor in the spotlight of public interest. Focusing on these extraordinary moments, sociologists seem to perpetuate Goffman's tacit normative distinction that suggests relative authenticity of the backstage, where people, safely ensconced in their private spaces, live unburdened by the spuriousness of public exhibition, only which is indeed truly performed.

In feminist and gender studies, scholars (Butler, 1988; Morris, 1995) emphasised the mundane, everyday flow of performativity. Indeed, this is the utmost 'backstage' of the everyday performance of gender and status that all social actors engage in. The processes that lie between these two extremes of extraordinariness and almost unconscious individual mundanity – the mid-level social processes that are highly routinized but not entirely routine – escaped this analytical aperture.

I argue that these processes can be seen as performances too. Spotlight moments play only relatively minor role in the lives of intellectuals. Often, their days are spent

preparing, in one way or another, for these peak performances by studying and learning, writing, reading, practising. Politicians hone their most important speeches with coaches, poets rehearse their readings before friends. Musicians are a particularly appropriate example, as they regularly engage in high-intensity rehearsals or masterclasses that are performative but usually not public. Such processes are far from solitary and often occur as collectively organised, premeditated, and staged pursuits that, despite being withdrawn from public scrutiny, are still performances – it is here that actors collectively strive to understand particular issues and develop arguments, or where they learn from their peers and seniors. In the world of intellectuals, particularly academic intellectuals, these are seminars, lectures, discussion clubs or even studying, which are all thoroughly performative. They serve the key role in the constitution of groups or movements as well as individuals' appeal.

The study of such small to mid-level social processes has been largely relegated to the field of symbolic interactionism, concerned with inner-group dynamics and often attending to the characteristic micro-sociological scope. But although they are, indeed, to a large degree contingent on the structure of the interaction, events such as discussion clubs or university seminars are performances (both individual and collective) that articulate existing symbolic meanings and forge new ones. Every social movement and intellectual fashion rests on small collectives of individuals, 'creative circles' (Farrell, 2003) that actively engage in performative maintenance or innovation of existing cultural and moral order.

At the same time, seminars, lectures or debates – just like spotlight performances – depend on the dramatic and presentational capacity of their key social actors, their acumen and ability to navigate symbolic structures of their discipline. They engage in interaction to develop and polish their thoughts as well as to negotiate and collectively establish the meaning of their pursuit. And, just like spotlight performances, these mid-level performances can spectacularly succeed by establishing new intellectual programs or fail, resulting in disgruntlement, social distance and dissolution of authority. Clearly, despite being seldom discussed in the academic literature on performance, these events possess a fundamental element of meaning-making and presentation. They can be also identified as having evident symbolic and social consequences. Through performances

delivered in seminar rooms, new styles are created, existing thought-systems spread, and communities spawned or broken.

The focus on mid-level performances offers a path towards the application of performance theory to unofficial seminars. Czechoslovak non-conformists had limited resources and almost no access to the public sphere and official institutions where they would be able to deliver spotlight performances. Nonetheless, as I argue, the seminars they organised can also be analysed as performances that could lead to notoriety or iconicity and have a recognisable impact on the social lives of individuals who participated in them.

The next section further explores the problem of performance through discussion of charisma. I understand charisma in the context of intellectuals as the ability of actors to perform in a way that makes them seem as exuding intense personal magnetism and elicit interest of others up to the point that they willingly relate themselves to the intellectual agenda of the charismatic figure and even follow the figure through institutions. While this ability is crucial in many context and situations, I will focus in particular on the general case of intellectuals, pertinent to my specific topic of Czechoslovak unofficial philosophers.

The Charisma Process

The problem of charisma and charismatic performance has been widely discussed in analyses of religious leadership (Dawson, 2011; Finlay, 2002; Joosse, 2006a, 2012), revolutions (Andreas, 2007; Hinnebusch, 1984; Reed, 2013), and political leadership (Bendix, 1967; Hughes-Freeland, 2007; Joosse, 2018), but the concept has rarely been applied to the sociology of intellectuals. Yet, charisma can also illuminate social processes that make up the field of intellectuals and academia, such as emergence and sustenance of collaborative circles and intellectual movements.

In sociological discourse, the concept of charisma is firmly connected to the oeuvre of Max Weber, who defined it as ‘a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities’ (Weber, 1968)

Indeed, Weber was not the first one to analyse the problem of ‘great men’ (Carlyle, [1841] 2013) or extraordinary personalities in human societies, which, by the time of his writing, was a well-established field in history and philosophy (see Joosse, 2014; Lindholm, 1990) with famous contributions such as Nietzsche’s work on the ‘übermensch’ (Nietzsche, [1883] 1997). Weber’s theory drew inspiration dominantly from Rudolph Sohm’s work on Church history (Sohm, 1904) and sought to describe the particular form of authority in which leadership is assumed by extraordinary individuals. Despite the theological inspiration, Weber did not limit the concept merely to individuals oriented to the divine, but also to outstanding worldly leaders. As Shils summarised,

[Weber] used the term to refer to extraordinary individualities, i.e. powerful, ascendant, persistent, effectively expressive personalities who impose themselves on their environment by their exceptional courage, decisiveness, self-confidence, fluency, insight, energy, etc. and who do not necessarily believe they are working under divine inspiration (Shils, 1965: 200).

This definition seems to fit very well the processes occurring in academic and intellectual milieus, in which there are skilled performers with a significant personal appeal. Of course, in bureaucratised and institutionalised academia, they are rather exceptions from the rule.

However, to rely only on Weber’s work means to encounter significant problems in applying the concept to the social reality of intellectuals. As Reed recently highlighted, Weber’s conception of charisma was intrinsically tied to the problem of authority and domination (Reed, 2013) in ‘times of psychic, physical, economic, religious, political distress’ (Weber, 1968: 18). Charisma, therefore, was a concept designed to distinguish ‘innovators from maintainers’ (Shils, 1965: 199), the former referring to those who overturn and re-establish orders and the latter to those who sustain its traditional or legal authority. While indeed iconoclasm is often an attractive feature, this understanding of charisma clearly differs from the personal magnetism of outstanding figures that operate in the field of intellectual production, which usually exists within pre-existing frames of established institutions.

Moreover, for Weber, charisma was something that was impossible to learn. As he wrote in his analysis of Chinese literati, ‘one can neither teach nor train for charisma.

Either it exists in nuce, or it is infiltrated through a miracle of magical rebirth – otherwise, it cannot be attained’ (Weber, 1959: 120). And while perhaps some people are born duller than others (or were less lucky with divine inspirations) the charisma that I explore in relation to intellectuals is a feature that, at least in part, can only come through training and learning process. Nonetheless, Weber is right in that while the ability to deliver charismatic performances is refined through training, it is seldom recognised as such. This is due to the charismatic ideology surrounding creators, discussed for example by Bourdieu, which ‘directs the gaze towards the apparent producer – painter, composer, writer – and prevents us asking who has created this ‘creator’ and the magic power of transubstantiation with which the ‘creator’ and the magic power of transubstantiation with which the ‘creator’ is endowed’ (Bourdieu, 1996: 167).

My understanding of charisma draws on more recent perspectives that highlight its nature as a ‘non-routine, aura-laden, performatively constructed social authority of a particular person’ (Bartmanski, 2012: 431) or, in some cases, a collective of actors. Charisma does not necessarily emanate from a transformative endeavour but can be also the result of ‘order-creating, order-disclosing, order-discovering’ (Shils, 1965: 204), a ‘response to great ordering power’ (ibid.). In the general case of intellectuals, it is the ability of thinkers to draw attention to their personas and oeuvre, to entice students and sometimes even elicit the interest of the general public. Figures capable of charismatic performances may emerge within rather ordinary institutional contexts – often at universities or research institutes. Nevertheless, charisma indeed acquires special traction outside the institutionalised context. While in the firmly regulated institutional environment, actors are often compelled to participate in events to conform to the regulations imposed by the institution, outside of such regulated context it is often the actor’s responsibility to motivate their audience to repeated participation. For example, a compulsory first-year introduction course will always have its students no matter how terrible the lecturer is. To fulfil institutional requirements, they have to enrol. Of course, in a well-functioning academic context, a truly terrible lecturer should not be able to keep their job. Nevertheless, the point is that in institutional contexts, outstanding charisma is not always necessary. Something altogether different would be a lecturer who, due to a faculty conflict, decided to deliver lectures in a local café. Here, likely more would be

required in terms of presentation and charismatic appeal to entice students and even spawn a regularly attending group.

It is important to recognise that charisma is a processual feature (Finlay, 2002), one that may sometimes be facilitated by natural features of the actors (such as conforming to the current standards of attractiveness), but ultimately emerges within the temporal context of cultural performance. As Finlay argues, charisma cannot be seen as a trait but is constructed ‘as a social process of interaction between the incipient charismatic person and the followers’ (Finlay, 2002: 538). Reed highlights the role of a ‘spiral of success’, the enhancement of further success by the previous achievement, and suggests that sociologists should ‘theorize charismatic performances rather than charismatic leaders’ (Reed, 2013). Following Goffman, Joosse calls for a ‘dramaturgical’ approach to performative affectation (Joosse, 2012, 2017) to emphasise that element of active performative production of the charismatic effect.

This is particularly so because deeply ingrained, albeit relatively minuscule behavioural and performative patterns of charismatic leaders do have a significant influence on the eventual construction of charisma. For example, in his analysis of the charismatic appeal of the Canadian spiritual guru John de Ruiter, Joosse explored how the use of extended silence in conversation suggests the actor’s access to enigmatic, even transcendent forms of knowledge (Joosse, 2006a). According to the author, such silence is a ‘medium of projection’ (Joosse, 2006a: 361) that affords the audience to infuse various meanings based on culturally constructed expectations about spiritual leaders into the lack of explicit symbolic content. On the other hand, recent research in psychology suggests that whether an individual is perceived as charismatic may be influenced by their mental speed and swiftness (von Hippel et al., 2016).

While such minute aspects of demeanour clearly play an important role, charisma can also be constructed via larger public events in which actors mobilise resources through their direct or delegated social power and employ sophisticated, expensive means of symbolic production to convey the message. These events may be spotlight performances (Joosse, 2018) or even revolutionary movements (Andreas, 2007) which situate the actor in the centre of the focus of the whole society – be it on the national or global level. Charismatic processes unfold on various levels and in various degrees

depending on availability and a particular constellation of the elements of performance at the moment.

This point also suggests that the potential for charisma is unevenly distributed over different social contexts, media and genres of performance, and relies on the particular aesthetic and practical manner of fusion of the outlined elements of a performance. It is a feature that is gendered, raced and classed. While one particular manner of intellectual parlance can be appropriate for a seminar room, to employ it on a lecture stage or a nation-wide television debate may lead to disastrous failure and even dissolution of worship. This is particularly true in the case of intellectuals. The sociological, philosophical or symbolic analyses may entice and impress in an academic setting but fall on deaf ears in a broadcast interview.

Despite its clear role in the lives of intellectuals and academics, charisma has been seldom discussed in the context of education and/or intellectual movements. One notable exception is Clark's systematic study of the development of academic charisma (Clark, 2007), in which the author seeks to identify the sources of the phenomenon of 'the teacher as spiritual or cultic leader' (Clark, 2007: 15). Exploring the history of academia in particular in England and Germany, Clark develops a paradoxical argument, claiming that it was the bureaucratization of German universities, which sought to rationalise professorial authority through expert evaluation of chair candidates, which caused expansion of charisma in academia. Rationalisation backfired and engendered an entrepreneurial domain in which 'one now sought applause, *Beifall*, from the audience' (Clark, 2007: 89) and popularity (facilitated by written outputs) to support career claims. In his study, however, Clark uses too wide an aperture, which befits his historical or macro-sociological aims, but prevents the reader from seeing how charisma was constructed through performance, except for his references to asceticism. Importantly for my case, however, Clark identifies one new form of educational performance, emerging between the late 18th and the early 19th century, as especially conducive to charisma – the seminar, in which the emergent convener-student relation was described by contemporary academics as 'the radium of the soul', taking on 'a cultic aspect' (Clark, 2007: 181).

It is important to note the impact of charisma on followers, which makes clearer the dynamics between the actor and their audiences, as well as the structure of the audience. In Weber's initial conceptualisation, charismatic personality offered 'intense and immediate contact' with 'ultimate values' (Shils, 1965: 199), as opposed to the 'mediated contact' provided through institutional mediation of these values (Shils, 1965: 200). According to Joosse, while the usual understanding of charisma interprets the followers of the central figure as passive victims of the charismatic aura of the central personality, this is largely attributable to Parsons' flawed translation of Weber (Joosse, 2017), who in the original emphasised active emotional and interpretive projections of the followers into the figure. Movements and collectives founded on charisma are characterised by a large degree of psychological identification of the followers with the central figure, which may become integral to the identity of its followers (Alexander, 2010). In the academic context, this can be seen in the emergence of adjectives based on the charismatic figure's name – such as 'Foucauldian' of 'Heideggerian'.

In his recent work on charisma, Joosse highlighted the role played by 'charismatic aristocracy' (Joosse, 2017) in 'manufacturing the charisma' (Glassman, 1975) of the leader. Collectives or movements stirred by charismatic performances tend to develop a particular structural pattern, in which the leader is surrounded by a relatively firm group of 'charismatically qualified successors' (Weber, 1946: 327), 'distinguished from the laity by its propinquity to the leader' (Joosse, 2017: 337). These select few play a crucial role in the process of social radiation of charisma, promulgating the leader's renown among the population. As a result of their proximity to the sacred figure of the movement which radiates the charismatic aura, they themselves at times acquire significant charismatic appeal (Andreas, 2007), although this effect usually occurs only later in the movement's trajectory, often after the leader dies.

The conception of 'charismatic aristocracy' has important implications for performance theory because it casts a new light on processes of performance preparation and enactment. In collectives centred around a charismatic leader, the aristocratic followers may play a central role in the process of the elements' fusion by, in Glassman's words, 'making sure that robes, sceptres, insignias, myths, ideologies, and ceremonies' (Glassman, 1975: 624) are always ready and that the audience is well prepared to

recognize the leader's brilliance. In the case of an academic setting or an intellectual milieu, the charismatic aristocracy can refer to the immediate circle of students (in academia, often doctoral candidates) who over time participate in the organisation of events, the creation of opportunities, and dissemination of the leader's noetic achievement as well as their general renown. In some cases, the charismatic aristocracy of an intellectual may successfully preserve their legacy and even reinterpret or develop it further or, on the other hand, strive to preserve its intellectual purity.

In summary, charisma is a valuable concept with crucial importance for the study of intellectual life. It illuminates the process of emergence of intellectual coteries both outside of and within the structures of social institutions. I highlighted two particular aspects of charisma, developed in recent theoretical works, which connect it with the outlined theory of performance. The first is its dramaturgic nature, which emphasises processual construction of charisma through symbolic performances. This approach shifts the focus from the figure of a charismatic leader, and their innate qualities, to the process of their 'charismatization' (Barker, 1993). The second aspect refers to a specific development pattern within communities galvanised by charismatic performances. In such communities, charismatic leaders are surrounded by the 'aristocracy' of their closest admirers and acolytes who further promulgate their achievement and importance, and often strive to enshrine them in the collectively shared system of cultural structures.

With regards to intellectuals, the theory of charisma offers a perspective that allows me to explore the quality that individual performances must have to be recognised by their audiences as worthy of following. This is especially important in a situation such as that in which Czechoslovak unofficial seminars took place – when the act of following seems not to provide any other than either moral or noetic benefits. What is the nature of the process which sets apart the intellectuals who succeed in creating this illusion of intrinsic worth in their performances from those who do not?

Symbolic Representations and Boundary-Work

A crucial aspect of charismatic intellectual performances is the ability to distinguish the performance or the entire research agenda of the actor/s from others. Baert's notion of 'positioning', mentioned above, is relevant (Baert, 2015) but does not seem to capture the normative dimension of this symbolic process. By distinguishing themselves from others, intellectuals do not merely create a discursive space for themselves, but symbolically re-organise the available field of noetic pursuits into relevant, sacred forms of knowledge and profane forms of knowledge, which often amount to non-knowledge – a form of polluted knowledge that is recognised as spurious, quack knowledge. To capture this dimension, I draw on the concept of boundary-work.

The concept of boundary-work originates in the work of Gieryn (1983, 1997), who defined it as the process by which people 'define "science" by attributing [to it] characteristics that spatially segregate it from other territories in the cultural landscape' (Gieryn, 1997: 440). Social actors undertake this laborious discursive process 'for purposes of constructing a social boundary that distinguishes some intellectual activities as "non-science"' (Gieryn, 1983: 782). The concept of boundary-work and symbolic boundaries in general, has since entered the essential toolbox of social science and has been particularly useful to sociologists working on problems of class, race, or ethnicity (Bryson, 2005; Lamont, 2002; Lamont and Molnár, 2002; Wimmer, 2013) as well as more theoretical endeavours (Edelmann, 2018).

The motivation to articulate and negotiate boundaries, according to Gieryn's original formulation, is a dominantly calculative, rationally oriented wish to dominate the intellectual field. By constructing boundaries, scientists seek to protect their autonomy, monopolise their grip over resources or expand their authority and expertise. Boundary-work is therefore associated with power in the crudest sense. As Gieryn writes, 'boundary-work is also a useful ideological style when monopolising professional authority and resources in the hands of *some* scientists' (Gieryn, 1983: 787–788). This pragmatic parlance of struggle over resources, professional positions or places in the hierarchy in science and technology studies, as Pereira highlighted recently, originates – among other sources – in its focus on actors who were dominantly Western, white, and male, therefore 'in positions of relative authority' (Pereira, 2019: 6). Despite the current

strength of meaning-oriented cultural sociology (or sociologies), this utilitarian presumption behind boundary-work remains prominent (Braunstein, 2018).

This approach, however, is grossly reductive in its emphasis on rationally and pragmatically oriented pursuits at the expense of explanations that would take into account less practical and calculative forms of knowledge and motivation. Intellectuals do not act and argue merely on the impulse of their current or future well-being, prestige and institutional position. To the contrary, intellectual pursuits are crucially underpinned by symbolic meanings that often have a profoundly moral nature. Intellectuals and academics, except for a very few outliers, belong to communities of other like-minded individuals. They converge over charismatic individuals, particular research agendas and form ‘thought collectives’ (Fleck, 1981), and develop ‘epistemic cultures’ (Cetina, 2009). These collectives create and warrant knowledge and ‘epistemic styles’, which are the preferences ‘for particular ways of understanding how to build knowledge as well as belief in the very possibility of proving those theories’ (Lamont, 2009: 54).

Following Durkheim’s late work (Durkheim, [1912] 1995), Bloor highlighted that communities and discourses of academic intellectuals are centred around fundamental symbols and that the notions of ‘science and knowledge are typically afforded the same treatment as believers give to the sacred’ (Bloor, 1976: 44). One of the crucial symbols within the Western understanding of scientific and intellectual pursuit has been the idea of truth, which, according to Bloor, has ‘all the characteristics Durkheim stated for the sacred objects of religion: transcending individuals, objective, constraining, demanding respect’ (Bloor, 1976: 44). Needless to say, this has been the case for several millennia (Detienne, 1996). To put this point in the parlance of Alexander’s performance theory, intellectuals and scientists also have their morally charged deep symbolic representations.

Truth, indeed, is not the only relevant symbol in the intellectual realm and it may mean different things within different philosophical streams – there are others, such as social justice. Nonetheless, recognizing that deep symbols such as truth exist can lead towards a more nuanced and culturally attuned understanding of how intellectuals navigate the social world that is beyond mere power-play. Even great personal sacrifices that are

undertaken for, say, the Nobel Prize or another prestigious scientific enterprise, are made for more than simply pragmatic motives. They are prompted by the cultural allure and iconicity of these awards. Similarly, the emergence of feminist scholarship and its demarcation from the male-dominated and male-oriented veins in philosophical and scientific thought systems can hardly be attributed to the mere ambition of particular intellectuals to carve for themselves a comfortable niche. It does not take much to see that such symbolic, value-laden forms of motivation were likely to play a role in the case of unofficial philosophy, which offered relatively little social incentive but could, on the contrary, imperil participants' studies or employment. What was, however, an alternative to such social incentive, was a moral commitment that could have possibly been disseminated through performances of unofficial philosophers.

Of course, the general process of boundary-work is never purely pragmatic or purely normative. When groups or movements distinguish themselves from the mainstream or one from another, there tends to be a combination of these motives. The prevalence of a particular motivation depends on the structure of the group's agenda (its symbolic content), the relative social and cultural situation in which the group finds itself, and its own structure. Nonetheless, sociologists of intellectuals (as well as those of science and technology) cannot continue to deny the presence of normative and moral dimension of intellectual life.

It is necessary to point out that boundaries do not simply occur but result from intense meaning-making labour conveyed in performances of individuals and collectives. The process of articulating, confirming and solidifying boundaries is an example of a performance – and often an entire 'spiral' of performances that occur in both micro-interactive settings and as arguments positioned in the public sphere through various media. Distinctions between groups are routinely expressed in symbolic forms, whether narrative or aesthetic, and their success in terms of psychological identification of the audience with the message is contingent on the ability of the actor who defined the boundary to deliver the definition in an impressive and persuasive manner. In other words, for boundaries to be created and sustained, a felicitous fusion of the elements of performance must occur.

To focus merely on the explicitly symbolic labour of narrative-telling is, however, not enough. Intellectuals (and not only them) take their stances in a more sophisticated way. In his biography of Sartre, Baert drew, for example, attention to the choice of the publisher (Baert, 2015) which lent prestige to Sartre's intellectual pursuits. With the rise of predatorial or vanity publishing houses, this indeed remains a relevant concern today, perhaps even more than in the 20th century France. Besides publishers, there is a wealth of non-verbal yet meaningful ways to distinguish individuals and collectives as morally purer or intellectually superior to others – for example by the selection of spaces and places for their performances.

In summary, this section addressed the problem of boundary-work in intellectual and academic milieus. In the field of science and technology studies, the concept of boundary-work has been established as an analytical device for understanding how scientists and intellectuals use symbolic processes to gain leverage over others and succeed in the struggle over resources. As I argued, this perspective reduces the complexity of intellectuals' motivation to the mere pragmatic-utilitarian model of instrumentally rational behaviour. To the contrary, I highlighted the possibility of a more nuanced cultural explanation. To account for intellectual movements, sociologists need to understand the symbolic structures that motivate their members to delineate their pursuit from others within the field, and further explore the structures that allow some individuals and groups to develop a well-embedded, autonomous tradition, and drive others to disgruntlement and dissolution. I further emphasised that sociologists need to see the process of definition of symbolic boundaries in the intellectual scene as a performance that is fundamentally contingent on the successful fusion of the elements defined above.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued for a sociological theory that would capture the dynamics of intellectual life beyond pragmatic interest and pursuit of prestige. To reconstruct such an approach, I have built on existing resources from the Strong Program and its theory of performance, as well as the theories of charisma and boundary-work. Unlike sociologists who studied intellectual performances before, I argued that what is needed

is a less focus on spotlight performances and more on the processes that permeate the everyday life of intellectuals, especially academic intellectuals. Most interactions that intellectuals engage in, and which often define their careers, are removed from public attention and scrutiny. Nonetheless, seminars are performances just like lectures and political speeches.

In contrast to the sociologies of intellectuals which rely on social explanations, the performance approach sociology of intellectuals that I proposed here offers a fruitful mid-level perspective. It affords a better insight into how individuals and groups argue their causes and acquire a following. At the same time, the performance theory provides a toolbox for a deeper understanding of intellectual failure or divisiveness. This is something that cannot be found, for example, in a ritual theory of intellectuals by Collins (1998). Taking performance seriously improves also the existing cultural theories of intellectuals. When sociologists who explore ideational factors of intellectuals' trajectories and success (Alexander, 2016; Baert, 2015; Eyerman, 2011; Stevenson, 2019) write about performance or intervention, what they usually mean is text. However, textual presentation of self and one's mental life is but a part of intellectual performance.

Besides texts, intellectual performances include the techniques by which meanings are embodied, the strategies of problem selection and problem-solving, and in general the individually structured approach to the enactment of the protean scripts of intellectual life. In many situations, these aspects are more effective than the actual texts produced by intellectuals. At the same time, even well-honed texts may fail due to inefficient presentations and unpropitious conditions. Situations such as these cannot be adequately explored if sociologists do not devote sufficient attention to performance.

It should be said that the perspective of performance theory is not an approach that could explain everything about intellectuals. It cannot fully substitute large-scale theoretical projects such as Collins' network approach or Bourdieu's field analysis which seek to uncover the logic in why actors take the positions they do and in how their reputation travels through generations. But it can offer us better insight into how intellectuals act in everyday life, how they present their ideas and how they succeed in pushing their agenda in front of various audiences. The performance perspective is

promising also because, thanks to its attention to the micromechanics of individual presentation, it can capture nuances and details that are decisive in the process of intellectual success (or failure) but escape the aperture of grand theories that eschew the role of individually structured creative agency.

In the following chapters, I demonstrate that in the case of unofficial philosophers, it was exactly the way in which they performed that rendered them interesting – even fascinating and charismatic – to the audiences of their seminars. Through a combination of self-presentation, intense teaching style, and profound symbols, unofficial philosophers presented themselves as the only viable alternative for Czechoslovak philosophy. Although their claim to be ‘the only true philosophers’, as one of them put it in my interview (interview 5), can be disputed, the groups that emerged from their audiences offered safe haven for members of the destabilised non-conformist network. At the same time, their approach to defining and solving intellectual problems inspired their students to transform the way they thought about themselves and their role in the wider narrative of Czechoslovak and/or intellectual history, propelling them in various directions in their future lives.

CHAPTER 2: Methods

In this chapter, I offer an overview of my methodological approach, data collection, and analysis. The general questions driving this chapter are: is it possible to conduct an ethnography of events, performances, and interactions that occurred between five to three decades ago? And, moreover, if the network in question was prevented from institutionalising its activities, threatened, and seeking to cover its own tracks? Finally, is it possible to look back through the layers of narratives and heroic reinterpretations to explore with at least some plausibility how things happened?

In my thesis, I sought to overcome these challenges with a meticulous collection of data from several different sources. These sources were historical documents, created at the time when unofficial seminars were taking place, or retrospective recollections of seminar conveners and participants collected through interviews. I combined these sources of data into a historical ethnography focused on interpretation of the meanings articulated and perceived in intellectual performances of unofficial philosophers.

First, I explain what I mean by interpretive historical ethnography and how I selected the sources for my thesis, as well as which potential sources I did leave out and why. Each of the sources is then unpacked in detail, as I discuss the selection, research process, and challenges posed by each of the sources. Then I proceed to the data analysis strategy, the problems of ethics (especially salient with regard to the secret police files), and the limitations. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of my own position in relation to the Czech dissent.

Interpretive Historical Ethnography

The general research approach that I used in my study of private philosophy seminars in socialist Czechoslovakia can be described as interpretive historical ethnography. It is a research strategy that applies ethnographic principles to the research of phenomena that the investigator ‘cannot see or measure directly’ (Burch, 2010). According to Vaughan, it is an effort to ‘elicit structure and culture from documents... to understand how people in another time and place made sense of things’ (Vaughan, 2004). Such emphasis on processes of meaning-making in distant time and space can be traced to the

pioneering work of Thomas and Znaniecki (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1927), who famously analysed the correspondence and other documents of Polish immigrants in the USA to understand the structure of their relations. Another example of retrospective analysis is the work associated with the Annales school in historiography, e.g. Febvre and Martin's exploration of the history of the book trade in which, among other issues, the authors investigated the cultural resonance of particular works based on sales and production records (Febvre and Martin, 1997). Since then, this reconstructive approach has been productively applied in history, sociology and anthropology (Sahlins, 1996; Sewell, 1980).

I add 'interpretive' to emphasise that my historical ethnography aims to illuminate the processes by which social meanings are formed and forged, articulated, and the effect such articulation has on the social world. Rather than in structures of the collective life of Prague's philosophers, for example, the network constellations such as those researched by Collins (1998), I was interested in how they performed their philosophy and the underlying patterns of meanings that they articulated. In other words, I was interested in achieving an understanding of how unofficial seminars developed, what their participants found enticing about their teachers, and how did these performances influence their understanding of their social situation and their own role in the socialist society. As Reed argued recently, social life can only be understood with reference to the meaningful context in which it unfolds – individual and collective motivations, as well as social mechanisms 'emerge upon landscapes of meaning' (Reed, 2011: 137). The landscape of meaning is a metaphor that captures 'the variety of ways in which meaning and communication processes provide the basis for, and give form to, actors' subjectivities and strategies' (Reed, 2011: 110). According to Lund, this metaphor 'provides a way to analyse ethnographic materials by illuminating symbolic structures that enact thoughts and actions of groups and individuals in human affairs' (Lund, 2017: 76). To explore these landscapes, 'the investigator must spiral out through the layers of meaning that construe experience' (Reed, 2011: 90). The first challenge is, unsurprisingly, the identification and selection of sources that afford this 'spiralling' and engender understanding.

Identification and Selection of Data Sources

As Burch suggests, the most obvious problem in the historical ethnography research process is the identification and selection of sources which afford such reconstructive endeavour (Burch, 2010). This problem is further exacerbated if the phenomenon in question has a secretive or clandestine nature and participants themselves actively conceal their activities. The most common solution in studying social movements in non-democratic societies, and one I also find appropriate, is a combination of several types of primary sources. In her well-known study of the everyday experience of Stalinism, Fitzpatrick used a motley combination of sources, combining memories, state or police documents, as well as interviews recorded after WWII as a part of the Harvard Project on Soviet Social System (Fitzpatrick, 2000). Mary Fulbrook, after analysing the GDR through archival sources (Fulbrook, 1998), has also recently adopted an approach based on a combination of oral history and documentary research to explore Germany's 20th-century dictatorships (Fulbrook, 2011). Kligman and Verdery, both expanding their individual researches in socialist Romania (Kligman, 1990; Verdery, 1995), fruitfully combined archival research with oral history interviews to offer anthropological insight into the process of collectivisation in the Romanian countryside (Kligman and Verdery, 2011). Yet more pertinently, Andreas Glaeser's intricate analysis of the GDR's disintegration, which combined metatheoretical endeavour with meticulous research, is an example of a productive combination of interviews (in this case police officers and former non-conformists) with documentary research (Glaeser, 2011).

Interviews with direct participants were, therefore, one obvious answer to the puzzle of my data selection. This source has been used widely in studies of pre-1989 Eastern European societies (Ritchie, 2014; Vaněk and Mücke, 2016). After the 1989 revolutions, historians, sociologists, and anthropologists were eager to collect and bring to the fore of their academic discourses the stories repressed by the socialist regime. Nonetheless, I wanted to be cautious with interviewing for several reasons, and although I decided to include interviews in the study, I sought other sources of data. The problem was that besides time distance, which I believe may affect the clarity and detail of recollection, current research (Bolton, 2012) highlighted the long-lasting mythopoetic processes in Czech dissent, unfolding both before and after the 1989 revolution. In other

words, the dissent and counter-culture became a mythos (modelled on strong moral binaries), and later profoundly shaped the mainstream categories through which Czechoslovak society thinks about its past. An apt example was the pervasive decoupling of the Party and the Society and coding one as pure and the other as fundamentally polluted and evil (Kolář and Pullmann, 2017), while reality indeed was less clear-cut.

However, what other sources are there to confront and corroborate the memory of direct participants? Given the omnipresent fear about state intervention, one answer lends itself immediately – the files of the secret police, the *Státní bezpečnost* (Czech) / *Štátna bezpečnosť* (Slovak) [State Security]. Therefore, I decided to use the accessible digitalized archive of the secret police to see what files they collected on unofficial participants. The dossiers I identified were instrumental in particular because they contain rich information on daily lives of individuals who were under police surveillance, reports from seminars and lectures, transcripts from questionings of participants and even internal communication between various ranks of the police system. Seeing the documents, themselves profoundly mythologized in Eastern European discourse as created by the supposedly insidious dark power of the regime, for the first time, I was surprised by the depth of screening, the level of occasional brutality and neglect of civil or human rights, but at the same time its lack of systematicity and power. The officers were themselves historically situated actors who needed to negotiate their position in pursuing the subjects of their surveillance. For example, they had to find a willing doctor who would permit them to sift through the clothes one philosopher left in the changing room when summoned for a medical check-up, to copy their flat key; they struggled with the attorney general's refusal to permit a house search despite what they considered abundant evidence of an illegal printing press in another philosopher's home; they seethed when a church branch that owned a flat in which a seminar was convened refused to terminate the philosopher's lease.

Although both interviews and police files offer some kind of a landscape, it is a rather blurry one – participants may select, misremember or not recall at all, and the secret police had its own goals in mind in producing their documents, not to mention lack of information or misinformation provided by its sources. Therefore, I included a third source for historical ethnography – the archive of Jan Hus Educational Foundation,

which has been located in Brno, the Czech Republic, since 2013. The archive contains documents produced by British academics in charge of the foundation since its establishment in 1979, including the foundation's internal communication and, importantly, reports written by dozens of foreign academics who visited Czechoslovakia and lectured to unofficial seminars. This was a particularly interesting and rich source of information, which provided me with contemporary insight from a third party, less involved in the struggle of Eastern European opposition. Although British academics were usually deeply moved by the endeavour of their Eastern European counterparts, and indeed were influenced by their myths and beliefs, they nevertheless offered a lens of 'anthropologists' reporting back from a trip to a different world (often, for example, they mused about the aesthetic state of Prague, which seemed to them to be falling apart).

Finally, I included reviews of philosophical works published in two samizdat journals – *Paraf: Paralelní akta filosofie* [Paraf: Parallel Acta of Philosophy] and *Kritický sborník* [Critical Review]. They represent the dominant thought streams within dissident philosophy. The reason for focusing on reviews was that I was interested not in the specific topics unofficial philosophers explored but rather in how they thought about philosophy – the ways in which they judged it, the qualitative criteria they applied, and the symbolic repertoires they used when talking about the meaning of philosophy.

By combining these four sources of data, each rich in its own right and offering a different kind of information, I created a corpus of materials that allows compelling interpretation. I aimed for cross-verification by engaging various data sources. This strategy was often successful and I was able to confirm the patterns of interactions and symbols from different sources and from different types of sources at once. Particularly fruitful was to cross-check information collected in interviews with the police files or Western reports. Often, for example, my interviewees would recall a seminar or an event that I could then verify in the police files and acquire more details (e.g. precise date, list of participants, occasionally an official complaint from the convener, etc.). Or, on the other hand, my interviewees would correct the information that I found in the police files or the JHEF reports, which occasionally contained imprecise information, such as references to planned seminar projects that, as I found out, eventually never took place.

Sometimes, however, triangulation was impossible simply because certain types of sources did not speak to certain topics explored later in the thesis. The secret police files, for example, did not contain much on the performances of unofficial seminar conveners. This was simply something that the policemen were not interested in, yet it emerged as a salient theme among all my interviewees. Yet, police files were indispensable when I explored solidarity and the transformational potential of these seminars – here, they resonated well with the interviews and JHEF documents.

Roads Not Taken

There are several sources that I excluded from the study. The first are the archival documents of Association Jan Hus, the French counterpart to Jan Hus Educational Foundation in Britain, stored along with the British documents in the Moravian Museum in Brno. These seemed to be, similarly to the JHEF, reports by academics who returned from Czechoslovakia. The reason was quite simple – I do not read French. I feel confident that, with a wealth of other data at hand, this is a justified loss of potential data. Moreover, the pursuits of the British and the French organisations were identical: they encountered the same philosophers in Czechoslovakia and lectured to the same students. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that there are perhaps elements of information specific to the French project that I missed by not using the material.

The second source that I did not use are recordings of unofficial seminars. Several of the seminars, especially Ladislav Hejdánek's groups, recorded their sessions, as well as lectures that were given by foreign academics. Recordings were originally intended as substitute study material for absent group members, or for circulation throughout counter-cultural and dissident networks. Many recording collections, such as Hejdánek's seminars, Ivan Havel Mondays or various ad hoc lectures, are now located in the *Libri Prohibiti* archive in Prague, which boasts a collection of more than 1000 cassettes with recorded seminars, lectures, and discussion. This number of recordings itself explains why I eventually decided to exclude them from my data corpus: it was simply impossible to listen to over 1500 hours of seminar recordings, not to mention transcription necessary for systematic hermeneutic analysis. One possible solution was to select a sample, but there seemed to be no reasonable grounds on which I could

justify the selection of, let's say, Hejdánek's cycle on *Philosophical Cosmology* over his *Political Philosophy*. Moreover, some seminars were never recorded, while others were overrepresented (esp. Hejdánek was meticulous in his archiving). Had my interest been more specifically in one seminar group or one cycle, I could find a meaningful selection procedure. It was not the case, however, and I decided to leave this potential source aside.

The last potential source for extension of my data corpus would be the inclusion of more samizdat journals or émigré publications. I particularly regret my inability to include *Reflexe* [Reflections], the samizdat journal published by Ladislav Hejdánek. I did not include it for the simple reason that I was unable to locate physical or digitalized copies of the journal. Because *Reflections* was conceived of as a sister publication to *Paraf*, and Hejdánek contributed also to the Critical Review and is discussed in the interviews, however, I think his perspective is adequately represented in the data.

I also excluded articles written by Czech dissidents for Western outlets. Although they are indeed valuable sources, they present a particular interpretation that the dissidents offered to Western audiences, in which they may have possibly – deliberately or unwittingly – represented their case in a more dramatic light to gain sympathies from abroad. For the same reason, I used a very limited selection of articles from the émigré journal *Studie* [Studies], from which I selected only four articles that I saw as most consistent with the domestic unofficial discourse and at the same time rich in data because they offered succinct interpretations of unofficial philosophy. However, such writings were rare in Western journals.

Data Sources

Interviews

The first important sources of data for my research project were biographical interviews that I conducted between December 2017 and August 2018. Of these interviews, 13 were semi-structured, conducted face-to-face (11 in Prague and 2 in Oxford), in sessions lasting between 1 and 3,5 hours. 3 further interviews were conducted over e-mail with informants who were unable or unwilling to meet in person. Of my informants, 6 were

unofficial seminar students, 7 convened their seminars or lecture cycles, and 2 at some point visited Czechoslovakia as Western lecturers to the seminar. The female/male ratio was 2/14 – this gender imbalance also partially reflects the imbalance in the dissident milieu, which, consonantly with the patriarchal model of the era, favoured male heroism and assigned women dominantly assistant roles, albeit not entirely devoid of a sense of emancipation (Megan, 2008). Rather than representativeness, however, my search for participants was based on prominence within the network as well as availability, as some relevant unofficial philosophers were either abroad, in ill health or have since died.

In the Czech Republic, former seminar participants are not hard to come by. I began identifying my interviewees thanks to the narrative of Barbara Day's *The Velvet Philosophers* (Day, 1999)², which offers a wealth of names and events, and was the first point of reference in the initial stages of my research, together with the volume *Filosofie v podzemí – Filosofie v zázemí* [Philosophy in the Underground – Philosophy in the Background] (Bendová et al., 2013). After I started the interview process, however, it was my interviewees who also supplied further names, for example of students who were missing from the publications. New potential interviewees appeared also as I began exploring other sources, the police files and the JHEF archives. The anonymised table of my interviews is available in the appendix to the thesis. It includes the age of interviewees at the time of interview, relation to unofficial seminars, and their current position. I continued interviewing until the point of saturation when I was not collecting any new data, which I decided occurred at number 15. The 16th interview was conducted briefly over e-mail only to corroborate a specific episode that I had already known about but felt was insufficiently supported by my data to be used in the thesis.

I used a flexible semi-structured interview template. First, I introduced my research as a sociological study of unofficial seminars and offered my informants to read an informed consent form which offers a basic outline of my research interests. Then, I began with questions pertaining to their early youth and their personal path towards their interest in philosophy. As much as I wanted to know about the background of my informants, I

² Later, several of my interviewees warned me not to rely extensively on this publication, as they generally consider it factually flawed.

also wanted to break the ice and establish a basic relationship. In some cases, such as with informants in high demand, who could reserve only an hour or so of their time, I decided to cut directly to the topic. I inquired about their first contacts with the dissent, their experiences with the seminars, their take on the meaning of these enterprises, and their encounters with the secret police. The last part of the interview was devoted to questions about the effects of the seminars – their lasting social influence both in terms of the immediate community and collective, national life. The informed consent document can be found in *Appendix 3*. A sample interview template constructed for one of the interviews can be found in *Appendix 4*.

Throughout the interviews, I encouraged the interviewees to tell me episodes and stories, occasionally asking for their knowledge of events that I already knew from archival material (such as conflicts in seminars). The aspect of storytelling was most helpful in facilitating responses, and I noticed that this was particularly effective when participants shared an episode with humorous points and we could laugh together – and almost every interview had such moments. As Goodman-Delahunty and Howes argue, humour in interviews serves ‘to put interviewees at ease and diffuse tension experienced in the interview environment’ (Goodman-Delahunty and Howes, 2016: 284). I found this to be the case. Sharing laughter made my interviewees more relaxed and, in some cases, signalled them that I had sufficient knowledge of the unofficial environment to get their joke despite the age difference.

There were several significant issues that I encountered over the course of interviewing. In most cases, access was relatively non-problematic, and informants were happy to be interviewed. My age (24/25 at the time of interviews) and ethnicity (Slovak) were helpful, and my informers seemed often flattered that their activity during the socialist era remains interesting to somebody born after 1989. Some explicitly inquired about my age. However, in one case, one of the interviewees highlighted my lack of understanding of the era, especially regarding the secret police, and supposed inability to grasp the meaning of the situation. The majority of my interviewees were Czechs who lived a significant part (if not most) of their lives in Czechoslovakia and some felt nostalgic for the Czechoslovak state, divided in 1993. They often appreciated my effort as a Slovak student to study Czech history. In one case, the interviewee explicitly stated that they agreed to be interviewed because I was a Slovak. Several of my interviewees

were directly involved in politics at the time of the state devolution, and one even expressed regrets over their lacking will at the time to keep the binational state.

Perhaps the most important problem in my interviews was narrative ossification. In a way, my interviews were a form of ‘elite interviewing’ (Harvey, 2011). Most of my participants had an excellent command of cultural, symbolic resources, were extremely well-read and often held (or used to hold) high political, academic, or non-governmental positions (deans, professors, ministers, etc.). Not only were they mostly comfortable with being interviewed, but some of them had also extremely solid narratives of their unofficial activities during the socialist era. I realised this soon, in one of the first interviews, when I noticed that the informer was relating to me almost verbatim their account that I had already read before. I reacted by changing the strategy of interview preparation: I began to carefully read previously published or recorded interviews and, as meticulously as possible, search for archival material that referred to specific episodes or relatively minor aspects of the activity, which could sway the interview towards less well-known facts. In a way, I tried to throw my informants off the balance, as well as to demonstrate that I had prepared beyond the usual. I believe this strategy worked and, in some cases, I was able to inspire my interviewees to go beyond their usual narratives, which I believe yielded better data, as it required the interviewees to think and recall at the moment, affording them little time to fall back on their usual, refined story. I also received positive comments from several interviewees who appreciated my preparatory research.

Secret Police Dossiers

In her most recent book, Katherine Verdery reflects on her experience of being followed by the Romanian secret police and her astonishment upon the discovery of a massive dossier in the police archive, which contained her ‘evil twin’ – a dangerous imperialist agent coming to Romania under the pretence of a Stanford PhD student (Verdery, 2018). In the countries of the Eastern Bloc, this was not an unusual experience. At the height of its power, for example, the East German secret police commanded a dense web of around 174 000 informers, with realistic estimates reaching as high as 500 000 unofficial collaborators (Koehler, 2008). Its Czechoslovak

counterpart, the *Státní bezpečnost* (in Czech) / *Štátna bezpečnosť* (in Slovak) [State Security] was considerably smaller with between 20 000 and 30 000 informers in the 1970s and 1980s (Žáček, 1996). Yet, it produced an effective result – thousands of citizens were controlled, blackmailed, harassed, abused, and some even murdered.

I drew on materials contained in the digitalized archive of the StB dossiers which were made available for research by *Archiv bezpečnostních složek* [The Archive of the Security Forces]. I collected documents from 30 dossiers, files in which the police stored the information on the person screened. These dossiers represented 30 individuals associated as organisers, lecturers or students, with unofficial philosophy seminars in Prague. Unfortunately, however, there are gaps, as several of the key organisers, mainly those who were Charter 77 signatories, had their dossiers destroyed in 1989, when the secret police sensed a change of political situation and began covering their tracks. Of the 30 I identified, 28 were Czech and 2 were British; 4 were female and 26 male. In these files, which contained between several dozen pages up to six thousand (the full volume of the secret police files that I selected was about 20 000 pages), I identified documents pertinent to unofficial seminars – many of the dossiers were meant to screen people who were engaged in a motley set of activities, of which seminars and philosophy were just a relatively minor part.

The selected documents included a variety of formal genres that can be categorized by their producer: the secret police (reports, interrogation transcripts, police agenda), the non-conformists (curriculum vitae, letters to government institutions, confiscated texts) or a third party (e.g. neighbour complaints, indictments, lecture transcripts or notes). By far the dominant form of secret police documents was a report. Reports were documents that most often summarised an encounter with an informer, referred to as ‘the Source’, identified by their registration number and code name in the extensive heading of the document, along with the name of the responsible officer, date, department and often also a reference to the dossier/s for which it may be relevant. To clarify: not every ‘source’ was a willing or even subsidized collaborator. Some, logged in the files as *Kandidát tajné spolupráce*, *Informátor* or *Kandidát agenta* [Candidate for secret collaboration, Informer or Candidate Agent] were usually unaware that the police entered them in their files, and may have been entirely oblivious to the fact that they ever encountered a police officer. On the other hand, categories such as *Důvěrník* or

Agent [Confidant, Agent] were aware and willing (with exceptions in the Confidant category) collaborators who often worked with the police for pay or advantage.

The length of these reports was usually between 2 and 10 pages. The reports were written in characteristic, linguistically neutralized and an-aesthetic bureaucratic parlance (Vatulescu, 2010), occasionally enhanced by the use of expert Latin terminology, such the medical term *profylaktický* [prophylactic = preventing disease], which indicates a withdrawn attitude, rationalized organisation and the modern episteme of the police. Most often, they recount information acquired from a Source, their cursory contextualisation and interpretation (sometimes along with basic psychological notes on the state of the source), brief summary, a list of people mentioned in the report along with their birth dates, address, employment. Occasionally, it was also possible to find suggestions for further progress in the case of the particular surveillance object. I include examples of secret police documents redacted and translated by me below (Fig. 2.1., 2.2.).

The data I acquired from the secret police archive are anonymized by me. Instead of using real names, the quotes from secret police files use generic monikers such as ‘Philosopher’ or ‘Philosopher 1’ and ‘Philosopher 2’ in case more individuals are referenced in the report. The most important reason for this is their sensitivity – they include private information as well as information that might be interpreted in a way that could put the reputation of individuals in jeopardy. As Horne notes, ‘even providing access to information in secret police files could violate personal rights of privacy (...) and undermine trust networks’ (Horne, 2017: 8). Even though three decades have passed since the fall of socialism, possible collaboration with the secret police remains a stigma. My work is primarily sociological, and my aim was not to uncover shocking information about particular individuals but to understand the cultural logic and social context that guided and underpinned the existence of unofficial seminars. The secret police documents were important because they contain direct observations of the work of unofficial seminars, their topics, the concerns of their participants and conveners, as well as the emerging relationships between participants.

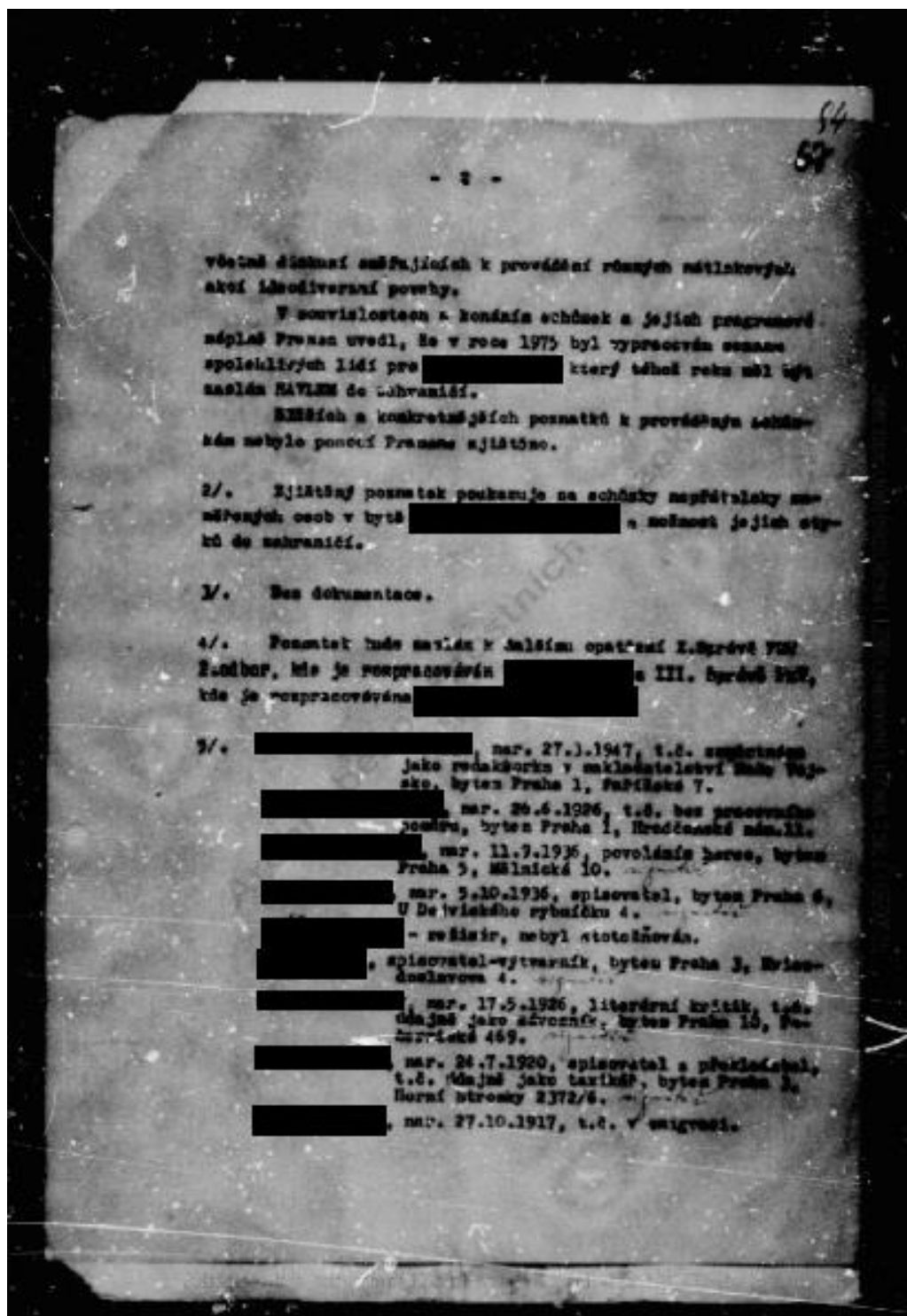


Fig. 2.2.: An example of a secret police report from 3rd March, redacted by me, which documents meetings of a group of intellectuals in 1976, pg. 2. The text continues: 'including those suggesting various actions of an ideological-diversionist character. In connection to the meetings, the Source said that in 1975 they produced a list of reliable people that was supposed to be sent abroad. The Source was unable to find more about such actions.' Follows an anonymised list of participants.

Nonetheless, the secret police dossiers must be approached with caution. Every document is ‘always produced from a particular viewpoint’ (Stanley, 2017: 54). In this particular case, the viewpoint and intentions of the police were indeed hostile to their objects, as the surveillance of unofficial philosophers and non-conformists in general was guided by the ultimate goal of ‘decomposition’, which ‘aimed to prevent the formation of dissidence by altering the self and other perceptions of activists, by “organizing failures,” by spreading rumours to [sow] distrust among groups or individual movement participants, and so on’ (Glaeser, 2011: 461). This, however, does not undermine the truth-value of the information these files contain. Although their intentions were hostile, police officers could not simply devise false information and circulate them through their ranks. They could acquire such false information from their sources but, to counter this possibility, the officers usually sought to double-check and cross-check what they received. Therefore, while it is indeed necessary to be cautious when it comes to various evaluative judgments of the police (which saw the unofficial philosophers as the enemy of the socialist regime), if the officers noted an event, a seminar, a meeting, an answer in questioning transcript, etc., we can usually safely assume that it did take place.

Jan Hus Educational Foundation Documents

The second archival source for this study was the archive of Jan Hus Educational Foundation. This archive is located in the Moravian Museum’s *Jiří Gruša House* in Brno, the Czech Republic, to which it was donated in 2013 by Roger Scruton, who presided over the foundation in the 1980s. The archive consists of thousands of pages of documents, tape recordings, and floppy disks. Because the archive remains uncatalogued and unsystematised, I refer to the documents from JHEF by referencing the author’s name (if available), the title of the document, and year (if available). Specific dates of the visit are available in the appropriate references section.

The documents I acquired from this archive are varied: reports by Western visitors, guidelines that they received from the foundation, trustee board meeting transcripts, course plans, Roger Scruton’s private and professional correspondence pertinent to JHEF’s mission (with Czech and Slovak dissidents as well as parties abroad), letters and

scholarship applications from Czechoslovak dissidents. The most important source among these documents were reports submitted by Western academics to the foundation – most of them were relatively detailed narratives of their visits (some precisely described the activities of visitors in terms of hours and minutes) that were supposed to inform other JHEF members and collaborators about the quality of the courses, atmosphere at the seminars, relations and mood within the dissent, or the secret police activity. Typically, they were between 1-5 pages long, with some exceptions extending to almost 20 pages. For my research purposes, I selected only the documents pertaining to Prague seminars, and only to those convened before 1989 (JHEF continues to operate to this day). An example of a typical JHEF report can be seen below (Fig. 2.3., 2.4.).



Roger Scruton
6, Linden Gardens
LONDON W2.

Dear Roger,

Here is my report on the visit to Prague:

We had three "working" sessions, on the evenings of the 16th, 17th and 18th of April.
1st meeting: Lecture on "Hannah Arendt's Theory of Political Judgment", at Rudolph's house, attended by 6 Czechs.
2nd meeting: Lecture on "Hannah Arendt's Concept of Freedom", at Pavel's house, attended by 11 Czechs, including wife of Benda and brother of Havel.
3rd meeting: Questions and discussion, at Rudolph's house, attended by 5 Czechs.

At each of these sessions, all of my contributions were translated into Czech. The discussions were all extremely lively, and I was very impressed by how knowledgeable they were about the work of Hannah Arendt. The questions they raised were both intellectually very serious and deeply informed by their day-to-day political experience. They seemed to get much out of the exchange, and I know that I profitted a great deal from it. By any measure, such an exchange ~~xxxx~~ must be accounted extremely worthwhile, and I feel that my own visit was a success in every way. I might add that we were treated to wonderful hospitality by Alena, Rudolph, and Pavel.

Rudolph's group would like to receive additional copies of books by Arendt (have you sent them Rahel Varnhagen or The Jew as Parish ed. R. Feldman?); articles by Arendt (such as "What is Existenz Philosophy", Partisan Review, Winter, 1946); commentaries on Arendt (I suggest: Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World, ed. Melvyn Hill, St. Martin's Press); and related works of political theory (such as Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future, by John Dunn).

Communications seem to be a bit confused: For some reason, they thought I would be arriving on Friday rather than Saturday, and the material I sent (through David Levy) went a bit astray. My book was thought to be lost, but turned up on Pavel's bookshelf (I spotted it between two volumes of Tolkien!).

In addition to taking in books, newspapers, and messages, I also brought them 20 blank cassette tapes. I would be very grateful if the fund could reimburse me for the fourteen pounds I spent on these tapes.

I had no problems getting in or out of the country, was not accosted in any way by State Security, and, so far as

Fig. 2.3.: A typical report submitted to JHEF by Ronald Beiner, pg. 1.

I know, was never followed. However, Alena and Rudolph reported that there is now beginning a period of great tension in Czechoslovakia. They believe that purges are going on in the Soviet Union, and that the Czech government are trying to anticipate these with a round of purges of their own, in the guise of an anti-corruption campaign. Things are very tense because everyone is fearful of their own position.

Messages:

1. Alena was furious about chocolate box brought in for Kavan (containing "dreadful" emigré pamphlets, etc.) She said this put me at unnecessary risk, and abused the link. All contact & all dealings with Kavan are to be ended. Visitors to be warned not to accept material from him.
2. Film script - May Day best - with Prague full of tourists. Will be difficult getting in with professional cameras. Should pose as students, with CND badges, etc. Too dangerous for Roger to enter until after Peace Congress in June (July or September would be better). If script is received, and cameramen coming according to plan, send postcard (preferably to Rudolph) saying: "Got your card; will be coming on holiday" or something to that effect.

Rudolph's comments on Roger's script: Overall, he likes it, and will co-operate fully.

i) Diaries of Segna are thought to be an unreliable source. He was someone of low intelligence, and his diaries are not known in Prague. If the source (in English or German) can be sent as soon as possible, it will be expertly analyzed by military historians, etc.

ii) Material on terrorists in Turkey may reflect badly on Kurds, since they also receive arms from East Europe. Czechs are sensitive to this: don't want them lumped together with other terrorists.

iii) For interviews in Eastern Europe, Rudolph will be able to help in supplying people in East Germany and Budapest.

3. Plus - Received money in time. Despite earlier confusion, all is now clear. Sends thanks.

Alena sends regards to Steven Lukes. Wants to know when Alan Montefiore will be coming. Sends thanks to Sally. Re visit of M. Hutton, she was unable to arrange the reading list (Jacob T.)

4. Brno group - project to be co-ordinated by Jiri Muller. He needs personal grant for sanizdat. Also, scholarships for people to be nominated by him. Collaboration & affiliation with Western industry, academies, etc. is permitted (e.g., joint research on ecology, or scientific contracts). Important that precedents be maintained and securely established. Any such contacts that will be recognized by the Czech government should be sought; Muller will nominate the people to take part.

Fig. 2.4.: A typical report submitted to JHEF by Ronald Beiner, pg. 2.

Samizdat Reviews and Articles

The final source of data for my project were reviews of philosophical works (monographs, journals and edited volumes) in samizdat journals *Kritický sborník* [Critical Review] and *Paraf: Paralelní akta filosofie* [Paraf: Parallel Acta of Philosophy]. The reason for the focus on reviews rather than original contributions was that rather than in the philosophy itself, I was interested in symbolic repertoires that participants in unofficial seminars invoked to think about philosophy and to argue for the quality of noetic contribution or, on the other hand, the lack thereof. I chose these two journals as representatives of the high-brow unofficial discourses on humanities. Both had prominent contributors from dissident circles, demonstratively aimed at academic-level standards, and were relatively long-lived. Both journals are accessible through the open-access digital archive www.scriptum.cz. I enriched the corpus of reviews with 5 reflection or meta-theoretical articles that I discovered in the exile journal *Studie* [Studies], in which participants in the unofficial philosophical scene discussed the meaning of philosophy or history of philosophy in Czechoslovakia, and two reviews from *Střední Evropa* [Central Europe] journal, referenced by my interviewees as important.

The *Critical Review* was published as samizdat between 1981 and 1989, initiated by František Kautman, Jan Vladislav, and Jindřich Pokorný. Its first editor was the writer and critic Josef Vohryzek, who was later succeeded by Jan Lopatka and Luboš Dobrovský, with editorial assistants Karel Palek and Miloš Rejchrt (Gruntorád et al., 2009). The title of the journal was intentionally fashioned to resemble the *Kritický měsíčník* [The Critical Monthly] published by one of the doyens of unofficial milieu, the literary theorist Václav Černý between 1938 and 1942, and between 1945-1948. The *Critical Review* was published quarterly, in the form of a cyclostyled typewritten volume. A typical issue was around 100 pages.

The structure of the journal's content changed significantly over the years. Initially, *Critical Review* comprised two sections – one for original contributions (called either *Articles*, *Studies*, *Essays*, or *Articles*, *Studies*) and one for criticism and news (varied over years: *Reviews*, *News*; *On Books*; *Reviews*). In 1982, the editors added also a *Debate*, *Polemics* section and *Book News*, a report of new samizdat translations. 1983

marked a significant internal heterogenization of the journal, developing a special section for films, opera (the regular *The Opera Watch*), written by Petr Rezek, a lynchpin of unofficial philosophy scene, under the nom-de-plume Caruso. Since 1984, *Critical Review* published also theatre and fine art reviews, as well as feuilletons. In 1983, 1984, and 1985, the journal issued also yearbooks (or half-yearbook in the case of 1985) with original articles.

In *Critical Review*, I focused in particular on the review section. Despite the literary orientation of the journal, contributions often included reviews of current philosophy, Czech as well as international production. It may be surprising to see reviews of works such as Foucault's 1975 classic *Discipline and Punish*, not translated into Czech until 2000, but it only attests to Czech dissidents' effort to maintain a dialogue with current production in Western Europe, as well as functional channels through which blacklisted literature (such as Foucault) was delivered to Czechoslovakia. I included in my data corpus all 14 reviews of philosophical works published in the *Critical Review* (total number of all reviews were 45).

The second source, *Paraf*, was a samizdat philosophy journal, published irregularly in two (1985, 1987, 1988), three (1986), and one (1989) issues per year. The journal was initiated by the Catholic dissident Václav Benda, famous for coining the term 'parallel polis' (Benda, 2018), and was published until 1989. *Paraf* was a philosophy journal with ambition to provide an 'opportunity for concentration and confrontation, reestablishment of universal measures' (Benda, 1985: 4), while complying with 'academic standards' as well as 'formal requirements that commonly apply to academic publishing around the world' (Benda, 1985: 7). Unlike *Critical Review*, which required several years to consolidate the structure of its content, the outline of Benda's *Paraf* was, owing likely to its narrow focus, relatively fixed. Comprising usually over 100 pages, the journal was structured in three sections: original articles, translations or text criticism, and reviews. I focused on the last section. Together with Benda's programmatic statement from the first issue, my corpus included all 19 reviews/polemic contributions pertaining to philosophy (out of total 34 reviews) published in *Paraf*, which I selected as the best representing the discourse of unofficial philosophy.

I also included 2 reviews of unofficial philosophy published by Petr Rezek, an unofficial philosopher himself, in a conservative outlet *Střední Evropa* [Central Europe]. Although the journal published Rezek's highly controversial criticisms of the unofficial scene, which my interviewees considered to be very important, it otherwise did not focus on philosophy but rather on history and political science, and therefore I did not include other articles. The author published his further works in *Critical Review*, and they are included in my data from that journal.

Finally, I added 5 meta-reflections on Czech philosophy from the émigré journal *Studie* [Studies], published between 1958 and 1991 in Rome by František Planner and Karel Vrána, later Karel Skalický with Jaroslav Pecháček, Antonín Kratochvíl, and Václav Steiner. I included them because all very succinctly articulated the meaning of unofficial seminars and presented a particular form of historical narrative representative of the symbolic realm of Czechoslovak unofficial life. All were written by central figures of the scene who all convened seminars. These articles were:

Hejdánek, Ladislav. 1982. 'K situaci filosofie' [On Philosophy's Situation]. *Studie* 24 (81): 279-282.

Kroupa, Daniel. 1980. 'Život filosofa' [The Life of a Philosopher]. *Studie* 22 (68): 91-122.

Neubauer, Zdeněk. 1980. 'Co je to filosofie' [What is Philosophy]. *Studie* 22 (70): 326-354.

Tomin, Julius. 1978. 'Já jsem jenom vrátná' [I am merely a receptionist]. *Studie* 20 (58): 69-71.

XYZ³ (1977) 'Čeští filosofové po 30 letech: Současný stav „normalisované filosofie' [Czech Philosophers after 30 years: The current state of 'normalised' philosophy] *Studie* 49: 4-22.

³ XYZ was a pseudonym used by the author.

Data Analysis

The main problem that had to be tackled in the process of data analysis was the variability of material at hand. This required an analytical strategy that would allow me to explore meanings in texts, police descriptions, archival materials and interview transcripts. My goal was to reconstruct the ‘landscape of meaning’ (Reed, 2011) of the unofficial philosophy scene in Czechoslovakia, the complex structure of symbols and their mutual relations which demonstrate partial coherence (Sewell, 2005), which provide the background for social action. It was clear, however, that I would not be able to capture minuscule transformations of this landscape, given the relatively long timeframe of my research (1968-1989). Instead of the ever-changing symbolic repertoires that informed particular scripts, I focused on uncovering lasting trends in unofficial philosophers’ interpretation of both their own activities and the performances of the state and its official academic world. I was looking at the background symbolic representations (Alexander, 2004) that linked seminars to each other across space and time, and regularities that revealed generalizable knowledge about social processes in the unofficial sphere in socialist countries.

This difference between transitive, ephemeral symbolic repertoires and deep meanings can be explained through Alexander’s distinction between deep symbolic representations and immediate scripts, used in performance (Alexander, 2004). While immediate scripts are the particular instances of communicative symbolic practice, deep symbolic representations refer to central symbols that underpin the cultural system, organised according to the fundamental binary logic of sacred and profane (Alexander and Smith, 2001). This level of meaning, metaphorically designated as ‘deep’, is the fundamental aspect of collective life and refers to shared symbolic structures with the most profound efficacy to motivate social action. The point is, however, that these deep symbolic representations may not be evident, buried under the complexity and variability of everyday interactions. However, they can be perceived through research, at the level of ‘documentary meaning’, described by Mannheim as the symbolic dimension of a cultural object or situation that is beyond the conscious control of social actors (Mannheim, 2012).

To identify such regularities in my data, I drew inspiration from methodological resources offered by the qualitative content analysis approach (Schreier, 2012). Compared to the more familiar grounded theory, the qualitative content analysis offers a more flexible approach to constructing the coding frame, which is the ‘heart of the method’ (Schreier, 2012: 6), and is better suited to uncover latent meanings in the text (Cho and Lee, 2014). This owes particularly to the openness of the qualitative content analysis to various forms of research logic – inductive, deductive as well as abductive, called also ‘retroductive’ (Graneheim et al., 2017) which combines advantages of the previous two and allows the researcher to move between a theoretically-inspired frame and the development of categories based on inductive analysis of the data.

For the analysis itself, I used qualitative analysis software NVivo 12. I approached the frame construction from the vantage point of deductive research logic, founding my master categories on Jeffrey Alexander’s cultural pragmatics (Alexander, 2004), adjusting its structure to social actors delivering the performance, scripts and symbols, and ritual effect on the audience. As I used these master categories for initial explorations of the data, I began enriching the frame by inductively developed subcategories, constructed according to meanings and phenomena observed, such as the central binary distinctions, their particular instantiations, as well as the nature of charisma that the seminar conveners exuded and development of solidarity ties among actors. Some data sources lent themselves particularly easily to certain codes and others were more resistant. For example, the police files contain relatively little symbolic content articulated directly by the actors. Instead, they offer information on social processes and emerging ties that unfolded on the backdrop of the symbolic structure. Reviews were a different case and contained information that could only contribute to the corpus of symbolic meanings. These inherent differences in the nature of data sources account for the differences in their representation and usefulness for individual empirical chapters of this thesis.

Ethics

My data corpus contained two types of data that required special treatment in terms of research ethics: interviews and the secret police files. Compared to JHEF reports and

samizdat articles, which are both publicly available for researchers and generally do not contain sensitive information, interviews and police files were problematic in that they occasionally revealed information that can be considered sensitive or even threatening individual reputations.

Interviews posed several ethical dilemmas. Czech dissent was a tightly-knit group of individuals who collectively experienced times of trauma and scarcity, as well as the ritual effect of clandestine or demonstrative social actions that bounded them together by friendships as well as romantic relationships and marriages. Yet, they also experienced contentions, from petty conflicts to profound ideological rifts, some of which particularly escalated after 1989, when some former dissidents entered the top echelons of political life and many perhaps felt they were left behind, or disagreed with the new, capitalist orientation. Put simply, it is a fragile community. From the beginning, therefore, I decided to grant my interviewees anonymity, because, as researchers working with qualitative interviews argue, anonymity builds ‘trust and rapport’ as well as ‘maintains ethical standards and the integrity of the research process’ (Kaiser, 2009: 1634).

The anonymisation of interviewees – their redaction with the goal of impeding possible identification of their source – is far from simple. Indeed, according to Van den Hoonaard, it is ‘a virtually unachievable goal in ethnographic and qualitative research’ (van den Hoonaard, 2003: 141). I tried to come as close as possible, by omitting information that could clearly lead to the identification of the interviewee, such as involvement in a very specific historical situation or direct (e.g. family) relation to other actors. I believe that I anonymised the interviews thoroughly enough that the interviewees are impossible to identify, except for one or two cases that could not be omitted for the sake of historical accuracy, and which could perhaps be recognised by someone with extensive knowledge of the unofficial philosophy scene.

Another ethical challenge of interviewing was protecting the reputation of others. I offered all my interviewees control of the recording device and the opportunity to go ‘off-record’ at any time. There was only one incident in which an interviewee requested that I not quote an episode he told me about. This incident concerned an episode that involved himself and another interviewee in a chance encounter with a secret police

officer who helped them out of some trouble. Recently, I was very much surprised to listen to this interviewee on the radio, recollecting the life of this friend, who recently passed away, and using a highly mythologized and factually incorrect version of this episode, one which he himself explicitly debunked for me. What is clear here, is the power of the moral myth of the dissent as well as the fragility of the dissident reputation that can be easily tarnished by any link with the secret police. What was more common, was my informants disparaging their former colleagues' academic or intellectual qualities. I anonymised or entirely left out moments in which I felt that other seminar participants may have been unfairly scorned by my interviewees, in order to avoid disseminating gossip and fuelling personal animosities.

One particular challenge with anonymization was that informants were interested in others I may have talked to, which is a trait that seems to occur in small samples and elite interviews (Lancaster, 2017). I always refused to name my informants, politely emphasising that I grant anonymity to all participants including the person asking, and therefore cannot relate this information to them. In all cases, informants accepted the explanation and only sometimes suggested names that they urged me not to overlook. I was caught off guard in one moment when in the course of interview an informant asked me suddenly about another participant:

... so, yes, I went there. Lots of people attended, and it was a motley crowd and the police must have known, it was really out there. This [person] went there as well, and I was always thinking, what was he doing there? He actually studied at the uni. Wasn't he afraid that they might kick him out? And, well, after the revolution, guess what... he turned out to have been a secret police collaborator... what a surprise. So, did you talk to him too?' (Interview 11)

Indeed, I had interviewed the person in question but I replied with the 'non-disclosure' formula, regretting that it could be interpreted as a diplomatically formulated 'yes'. On further reflection, I realised that declining to answer on the grounds of ethical research protocol was better than denying it; as mentioned, the networks of former dissent and counter-culture are dense and it was entirely possible that the informant already knew who else I had interviewed.

The suspicion of collaboration with the police brings me to the ethical issues in research of the secret police files. The secret police was an intelligence apparatus that repeatedly and throughout its entire existence broke the law of its state and often also the

fundamental moral laws by relying on blackmail, corruption, and violence – although only a handful of its officers were eventually tried (e.g. the 2014 trial with officers who battered Petr Placák, see Valášková, 2014). The information contained in the files was acquired either without the police ‘sources’ in fact knowing that they are speaking to a police officer, under threat of possible repercussions or, on the other hand, with the idea of possible benefits. In a paradoxical twist of fate, therefore, individuals mentioned in these files as having any connection to the police become a ‘vulnerable group’, and a candidate for maximal possible confidentiality (Baez, 2002). For this reason, I decided to anonymize the names in the secret police files, with minor exceptions that are clearly harmless – for example, the name of the person who convened the seminar discussed in the report, which is an information of historical value that in no way tarnishes the reputation of the individual. Nonetheless, with every quotation I note the catalogue number of the police dossier, to offer at least some degree of identification for the reader. With this number, the files can be requested from the archive. *Appendix 1* contains a list of police files I drew on and their catalogue numbers. I would like to stress here that the anonymised names in quotations most of the time actually do not refer to individuals named in *Appendix 1* but usually to somebody else mentioned in the reports that were collected on the individual.

Furthermore, I abstained from using information that could jeopardize the reputation of the object of my research. By nature of their work, aimed at ‘prophylaxis’ or ‘decomposition’ (Glaeser, 2011) of countercultural and dissenting collectives, secret police officers collected not only factual information but also various ‘kompro material’ by which they sought to discredit participants within their communities or blackmail them into collaboration. Such material included accounts of alcohol or substance abuse, marital infidelity, etc. While some information of this nature had been widely published, e.g. in biographies of dissidents, much had not. Although in exceptional cases this information would have made some of my claims – e.g. about charisma – stronger, I was extremely cautious not to use it in order not to reveal details that could possibly cause injury to the reputation of unofficial seminar participants, both living and deceased.

Limitations

One of the major limitations of the project is its spatial focus. Besides Prague, unofficial seminars were organised also in Brno, where they proliferated in particular after the Moravian unofficial scene was connected with the Jan Hus Educational Foundation, as well as in other large towns such as Olomouc, and Bratislava. Prague philosophy seminars were, however, the best documented and arguably the most rigorous. As materials from the JHEF show, seminars in Brno had rather the character of ad hoc lectures which, although perhaps engaging, were far from the systematic lecture cycles convened by Ladislav Hejdánek, or Rezek's thorough philosophy seminars. The Bratislava JHEF project never took off properly. It seems to have been confined to a relatively narrow circle without philosophy background or interest and geared towards more or less direct proselytization of a conservative agenda which resonated with parts of the dominantly Catholic Slovak dissent. Between 1987 and 1989, there were only ten lectures (Day, 1999). Besides JHEF-organised enterprises, a similar but solitary project that I discovered over the course of my research was a Heidegger reading group convened in Bratislava by Peter Sýkora.

The limited focus on Prague also means that caution is necessary when generalizing the results of my research not only to Czechoslovakia but to Eastern Europe in general. Arguably, similar forms of unofficial activity emerged throughout the whole Eastern Bloc – performance art, rock concerts, petitions, clandestine religious activities, as well as various types of unofficial education. Nonetheless, all these activities had their symbolic and performative specificities. Clearly, unofficial prayer circles of Muslims (Ro'i, 2000) or Jews (Komaromi, 2018) in Russia were profoundly different from the Czechoslovak secret church. Applying the results of the research, therefore, must reflect the characteristics of the unofficial philosophy scene and Czechoslovak culture. For example, the emphasis on theories of truth is relatively local and rooted in Czech collective memory and culture, as well as the phenomenological tradition established by philosophers such as Jan Patočka. Other unofficial scenes – even the Slovak one – may have approached articulation of fundamental cultural symbols very differently. Nonetheless, I believe that the general logic of meanings and meaning-making processes is generalisable well beyond the case.

Another limitation lies in the scope of research. My research was designed to capture general processes over almost two decades rather than microscopically follow one group of philosophy students. Although I considered the possibility of including an in-depth case study of just one seminar in the dissertation, I soon found out that there are several fundamental obstacles to this. Importantly, it was challenging to establish even the exact personal composition of rigorous seminars groups, not to mention lecture cycles – attendance was not taken and three to four decades later, participants were usually unable to provide me with more than a few names of those who belong to their friendship group or those who became well-known after 1989. The secret police were not always able to establish the exact identity of participants. Similarly, evidence of discussion topics and lecture materials are, in most cases, lost or destroyed – if they ever existed in the first place. To find a complete curriculum, such as in the case of Rezek's Kant seminar, is absolutely exceptional. A micro-historical approach or even network analysis was, therefore, impossible.

Positionality

As I mentioned already in this chapter, during my research I realised that it was sometimes my own age and ethnicity, which helped me to acquire access to the field. It is perhaps worth expanding a little more on my background to explain the position from which I entered this research.

First, I never had the first-hand experience with the socialist regime. I was born only after the 1989 revolution as well as the 1993 devolution of Czechoslovakia, in Bratislava, the new capital of the Slovak Republic. Therefore, technically, in my PhD I studied the history of a foreign country and in a foreign tongue. This fact never failed to amuse my Czech interviewees. But as many Slovaks of my generation, although born after the split, I still grew up in a world of Czech cultural hegemony. While our textbooks (and teachers) were virulently nationalistic, the books I read and the TV programs I watched were in Czech, since much of good literature from bedtime stories to classics simply was available only in Czech. And therefore, although our languages are mutually intelligible, I speak fluent Czech and switch to it whenever I am in the Czech Republic, because younger Czechs, whose books and TV programmes were in

their native tongue, do not speak Slovak that well anymore. When I finished my secondary education, I moved to the Czech Republic, together with dozens of thousands of middle-class Slovak students, to attend a Czech university, where I studied sociology in Czech, and wrote both my BA and MSc thesis on cultural resistance and protest in Czechoslovakia – the first was on jazz music after 1948, and the other on student protests in May 1956.

There is another reason for my familiarity with Czech culture and interest in resistance against communism. My family history is deeply connected to the Czech Republic because my grandfather, who was born in Eastern Slovakia, grew up in the impoverished region of the Czech Highlands, where his family was forcibly relocated in 1951. The reason for this relocation was that my great-grandfather, his father, was a priest of the Greek Catholic Church, which was banned by the Communist Party that year, and substituted with the Russian Orthodox Church, to which he refused to convert. The Communist establishment, likely not quite comfortable with the idea of imprisoning Greek Catholic priests with large families, decided to scatter Greek Catholic clergy around the country to prevent the formation of any parallel networks of this religion. And thus my predecessors found themselves in the Czech part of the country, with my great-grandfather feeding cattle and working in construction jobs and my great-grandmother washing dishes in a restaurant. My grandfather had to graduate from two apprentice schools to be recognised as reformed bourgeois cadre and wait until 1968 to enrol at a university. My great grandfather could return to his parish in the same year, as the Greek Catholic Church was reinstated. He returned to a small village of Rudlov, which by then was largely Orthodox, and where nobody recognised him after more than twenty years. Four years later, he died aged 67, weakened from tuberculosis contracted from the cattle he fed. This was the story that I grew up with, and which defined my family as a ‘dissident family’ – despite literally all other of its members being good socialists.

There is one photo that I find interesting, with my great-grandfather celebrating a liturgy next to a strange, improvised altar. As my grandfather explained, this was not in a church, but already after the move to the Czech Highlands. Here, in the back room of his small house, my great-grandfather would every week celebrate by himself, in the Old Slavic language, the mass of a banned church. To me, his devotion to his religious

creed and ideas in general (something I myself have no attachment to) was profoundly interesting, and indeed inspired my interest in reading about others who had a similar fate. It only helped that many of the best works of 20th century Czech literature originate in the non-conformist network and that we had many of them at home.

At the same time, this family background alerted me to the problem of ethics in history. We never questioned that my great-grandfather was the hero of the story. Could he have found a way around his creed that would have avoided endangering his life and lives and jeopardizing his family's prospects? Nobody really asked these questions. After all, it was quite comfortable not to ask them, as with the fall of communism we told ourselves (or I was told) that we were a part of the heroic pedigree of people victimized by the former regime.

But actually, we were not. My great grandfather was not a dissident, at least not of the right kind. He had no documentary made about his fate, no books. No commemorative plaque was placed on the church where he celebrated his masses. Nobody talked about the displaced Greek Catholic priests, not even other Greek Catholics. My family's victory (and my great-grandfather's supposed sacrifice) simply did not deliver on the symbolic level. Well, yes, at least there was a story to tell until it turned out that every other person around us had some kind of an anti-Communist victim story. Of course, my grandfather would say that all other stories were not really as true and as good as that of his father. Those he especially despised were the famous dissidents, several of whom are the main actors in the narrative of this thesis. To him, they seemed (perhaps rightfully) to have gotten too much credit in the post-1989 world at the expense of people, like his father, whose fates were worse.

Therefore, I feel rather fortunately positioned to explore the problems of Czech dissent. As a Slovak born after 1989, yet immersed in Czech culture and educated in the Czech Republic, I feel I have the ability to approach the problem with sensitivity to central issues and symbols of the Czech society. Yet, I am sufficiently distant to not gloss over them as natural. Moreover, the family stories that I grew up with made me susceptible to paradoxes of the dissent and its own myth-making, rather strong throughout its history, and I believe also less likely to simply accept the legends of dissident heroes at face value.

Having explained how I carried out the research, I now move on to discuss my empirical findings. In the next chapter, I present an overview of Prague's unofficial seminars history. Although there were attempts to reconstruct the scene and its developments before, none of the works that I cited so far offered a complete account. My account not only offers what is to my knowledge the most complete picture of unofficial philosophy seminars and how they developed since the 1970s, but I also sketch out important links between their organisers. I connect the scene of unofficial philosophy to two important intellectual projects that emerged at Charles University's Faculty of Protestant Theology and Faculty of Philosophy, which sought to open a dialogue between Marxism and Christianity, as well as open the Czechoslovak philosophical thinking to new impulses from the West.

CHAPTER 3: Unofficial Philosophy Education in Normalised Prague

In this chapter, I reconstruct the scene of unofficial education in philosophy and related disciplines in Prague after the Second World War. The chapter concerns, in particular, the 1970s and the 1980s scene, which is the focus of my thesis. To my knowledge, this is the first attempt at such a comprehensive history of unofficial seminar projects and entails a number of hitherto unknown or unsystematised facts. For this reason, along with some external references, I use mostly my original findings from the secret police archives, interviews, and the Jan Hus Educational Foundation documents.

In other words, this chapter does not offer a sociological analysis, but a historical narrative in which the figures and symbols explored in subsequent empirical chapters are rooted. Nonetheless, I believe that it is an important part of this thesis for several reasons. First, it highlights the process by which unofficial seminars developed as well as their interconnectedness (for a comprehensive visualisation, see Figure 3. 4. at the end of this chapter). Importantly, I trace the history of the seminars back to the early 1960s, and especially two interlinked intellectual projects that took place at Charles University – the Jircháře platform and Milan Machovec’s ‘dialogical seminar’. These projects were crucial and formative arenas for the early intellectual development of several of the figures who became important in the non-conformist scene throughout the 1970s and 80s. In other words, they were the practise fields for unofficial seminar conveners. This also means that unofficial seminars cannot be seen as a spontaneous reaction to the post-1968 period of normalisation. Rather, unofficial seminars were projects that built on an existing tradition of intellectual exchange. Finally, to locate the origins of unofficial philosophy in platforms created by Christian theologians and Heideggerian phenomenologists (Jircháře) as well as humanist Marxists (Machovec’s seminar), provides important background for the meanings associated with unofficial philosophy which I will discuss in *Chapter 6* – truth, authenticity, and salvation.

The Prehistory of Unofficial Seminars: Before 1968

Unofficial philosophy education – a form of more or less focused educational effort in philosophy attempted outside of official, institutionalised context – emerged soon after the Second World War, already before the Communist takeover in 1948. An example of a pre-Communist unofficial seminar is Jan Patočka's collective study of Heidegger's *On The Essence of Truth* in 1947, a private reading group to which he invited his students, among them Ladislav Hejdánek, a philosopher who later became a central figure in the unofficial philosophy scene. After 1948, when the Communist Party began purging research institutions, universities, and public life in general of non-Marxist thought traditions and research agendas, similar study projects emerged throughout Prague, but, in the totalitarian era of late Stalinism, they were generally very confidential. Rather than systematic educational enterprises, these groups were friendly cliques of like-minded intellectuals.

Enterprises with more precisely defined public goals, which included also intellectual objectives articulated in philosophical parlance, emerged in the late 1950s and 1960s, with the delayed post-Stalinist liberalization of the Czechoslovak regime (Skilling, 1998). Particularly significant was the emergence of an intellectual circle around Jan Lukl Hromádka, a Protestant theologian and philosopher, a former lecturer at Princeton Theological Seminary, who advocated the idea of Marxist-Christian dialogue. Hromádka, a charismatic but controversial figure with an ambiguous position between the Czech Evangelical Church and the Communist Party, held in his flat regular meetings with younger Protestant intellectuals. These meetings were modelled after university seminars and usually included a presentation or a lecture delivered by a member of the circle or an invited intellectual (Hejdánek, 2008).

Importantly for this thesis, these meetings in Hromádka's flat gave rise to the so-called Jircháře platform, named eponymously after the Jircháře college of the Theological Faculty of Charles University, to which Hromádka decided to move the meetings in 1963. Two younger members of his group, Ladislav Hejdánek and Jiří Němec, became the principal organisers of these meetings. The new platform in Jircháře was an ecumenical debate cycle, which featured theologians from the Eastern and Western sides of the Iron Curtain, as well as interested Marxists, especially Milan Machovec,

who would later become an important unofficial seminar convener. Besides the lecture cycle, the so-called 'big seminar', there were two small seminar working groups, the first studying the works of Karl Rahner, the other on Martin Heidegger. Given the interest among students, the project soon drew the attention of the secret police. As one of the reports reveals, it observed also the size of the audience and intellectual excitement during one of the Jircháře meetings in 1966: 'Audience were about 120 people, mostly young. Docent MACHOVEC's talk (on Augustine and his relevance for the dialogue with Marxism) was received with massive applause and watched with great interest as well as expressions of approval' (KR-749386).

Interestingly, Jircháře organisers were, compared to other seminar conveners, relatively meticulous in recording attendance and details. In 1967, the organisers conducted a survey among their audience, which returned 50 question sheets (KR-749386). The details of the evaluation were passed on to the secret police by an agent. An interesting result, for example, was that the majority of respondents were Catholic (37), and only 9 were Protestant, despite the Protestant Faculty hosting the events. The organisers also noticed a considerable fluctuation in the numbers of the audience of the big seminar. Another interesting fact is that out of 50 audience members who returned the sheets, 34 (68 %) were employed and educated in natural sciences or engineering and only 12 (24 %) in humanities or social sciences. This was almost certainly due to inaccessibility of social sciences and humanities to people without stellar cadre track-record (i.e. from a working-class Communist family, active in the Communist youth organisations, etc.). Natural sciences, engineering or information science were often an alternative path for ambitious individuals whose family background and/or political activities would be unacceptable for admission committees of the humanities, which were under close control of the Party.

The survey also included an open question about the quality and possible improvements, in which, according to the police reports, the audience members criticized 'the absence of Jewish community representatives', 'the apolitical attitude of Rom. Catholic church', 'stereotypical form of discussion' (KR-749386). The most common criticism requested 'more system in lectures [and] better possibilities of preparation for discussions' (KR-749386). In their response archived by the secret

police, the organisers promised the audience that they would offer more space for discussion and circulate seminar papers in advance.

What Jircháře demonstrated, importantly, was the emergence of an interested audience that was eager to enter the philosophical and theological debate on phenomena such as ‘the situation of a Christian in today’s society’, the proclaimed topic for the 1968 academic year. Although not strictly an unofficial seminar, since organised on the grounds of an official university faculty and open to the public, Jircháře brought together the people who became important figures of the dissident scene in the next decade – Ladislav Hejdlánek, Jiří Němec, Jan Sokol, Jan Patočka, Milan Balabán, Jakub Trojan, Božena Komárková, Milan Machovec, Jiří Veber and others who later shaped the symbolic realm of Czech dissent. One can see this space as a form of performance practise field, in which the central figure of the future dissent had the opportunity to hone their performances, boost their reputation, and, indeed, embed themselves better in networks. Despite the interest of the police, Jircháře ran for seven years and were terminated only in 1970 with the beginning of the normalisation.

Besides Jircháře, the 1960s liberalization, albeit slow in comparison with Hungary or Poland, gave way also to other forms of intellectual performances that set the grounds for social relations and symbolic processes that later shaped the dissent. An important example was the seminar organised at Charles University by the philosopher Milan Machovec, devoted also to the fashionable Marxist-Christian dialogue. The focus on intellectual dialogue between these seemingly opposed traditions also engendered the name by which the project was colloquially known, the ‘dialogical seminar’.

Machovec’s dialogical seminar ran in parallel with the Jircháře project and brought to Prague intellectuals such as Karl Rahner, Rudi Dutschke, or Erich Fromm (Čurda, 2013). Among participants in this seminar were intellectuals who were later central to the scene of unofficial philosophy: Jiří Němec, Jan Sokol, Zdeněk Neubauer, Julius Tomin, Egon Bondy, Dana Horáková. Machovec’s project, although different from Jircháře by its clearly Marxist background, was similar in what it meant for Prague’s philosophy scene – it consolidated first audiences, facilitated networks and even international connections, and provided grounds for individuals to acquire reputation by performing in a prestigious institutional setting.

Both these interlinked projects, Jircháře and Milan Machovec's seminar, can be seen as pursuits that were absolutely crucial for the shape of Czech unofficial philosophy which emerged after 1968. Nearly everybody who would become important in the unofficial philosophy network and was mature enough to engage in academic debate by the late 1960s (i.e. usually born before 1948) frequented these platforms of Marxist-Christian and ecumenical dialogue. They were places where intellectuals met and publicly performed in front of each other, acquired first followers or admirers, and explored new ways of thinking – especially modern theology and Western Marxism.

While most important, the two projects mentioned above were not the sole philosophical platforms in Prague. Another example of an early intellectual arena were lecture cycles in Prague municipal library which, among others, featured intellectuals marginalized or ousted from academic life – such as Jan Patočka, Václav Černý, Jan Vladislav. Černý and Patočka both re-entered academia in 1968, after the Prague spring, but retired in 1970 and 1972 respectively, after the mandated obligatory retirement for academic employees at 65 (Petráň, 2015: 438) in 1969. They both remained active as unofficial educators after their retirement.

Unofficial Seminars After 1968

In the scene of unofficial philosophy, which began emerging with growing repressions after 1968, the former professor of Charles University Jan Patočka became particularly important. After Patočka retired in 1972, several of his colleagues and doctoral students approached him to arrange private consultations, which led to a focused seminar on Heidegger. These seminars were visited on a regular basis by former attendants of Patočka's official lectures (Jiří Polívka, Jiří Michálek, Ivan Chvatík, Miroslava Volková, Josef Vinař, Jaromír Kučera, Marika Křištofová, Pavel Kouba, Miroslav Petříček) as well as his former colleagues or more advanced academics (Stanislav Sousedík, Jiří Pešek, Jaroslava Pešková). In 1973 Patočka agreed to deliver a thematic lecture series for a wider audience. He prepared 11 lectures, which took place each in a different flat. These lectures were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and published as a samizdat book entitled *Plato and Europe* by Ivan Chvatík, Patočka's student and, to this day, the main editor of his works. Chvatík stored Patočka's works after his death in

1977 and, until 1989, published 27 volumes tied in blue canvas, the so-called ‘blue edition’⁴. These seminars and lectures are explored further in *Chapter 5* of this thesis.

In 1974 and 1975, Patočka followed with another lecture cycle, the *Heretical Essays on the Philosophy of History*, which took place first in the house of Pavel Brázda, a painter who hosted an intellectual salon, moving later to the place of a photographer Jaroslav Krejčí. The lectures were published in *Edice Petlice*, a samizdat edition ran by the writer Ludvík Vaculík, and left a lasting mark on the thinking of the Czech dissent, with its discussions of philosophy’s role throughout history and introduction of terms such as ‘the solidarity of the shaken’ that subsequently entered, although often in simplistic reinterpretations (Rezek, 2007), the parlance of Czech dissidents.

Patočka was further associated with another educational enterprise, an example of possible intersections between the official and the private, non-official intellectual life of normalised Prague, a seminar organised in a clinic for adolescent psychiatry in Klimentská street. This was an expert seminar organised between 1975 and 1977, which focused on philosophy and psychotherapy, especially Medard Boss’ phenomenological work *Grundriss der Medizin* (1971). According to a secret police report, these seminars met regularly every Tuesday after 3 pm and lasted for 2 to 2.5 hours (KR-669186 MV). Despite the psychological orientation and context, the seminars were attended by people who were central to unofficial philosophy – Jan Patočka, Jiří Němec (both participants in previous projects), Ivan Chvatík, Jiří Polívka, and Petr Rezek (participants and organisers of Patočka lecture series).

Another institution in mid-1970s Prague was a salon organised by Dana Horáková, Milan Machovec’s former philosophy student who had written a dissertation on Eckhart and Heidegger and spent a year abroad in New York, which was very unusual in 1970s Prague. If Patočka’s seminars were rigorous academic undertakings and exercises in the close reading of German phenomenology, meetings at Horáková’s place in her flat in Pařížská in central Prague were rather social get-togethers, facilitated by lectures of Prague’s intellectuals. Among them were philosophers such as Patočka, but also Ivan M. Havel, the brother of the dramatist and later Czechoslovak president Václav Havel

⁴ It is worth noting that Patočka’s works continue to be re-published by the Oikoymenh publishing house in dark blue canvas.

(with whom Horáková created the *Edice Expedice* samizdat edition), who spoke on cybernetics – with a PhD from Berkeley and a position at Charles University, Havel was at the forefront of Czechoslovak information science.

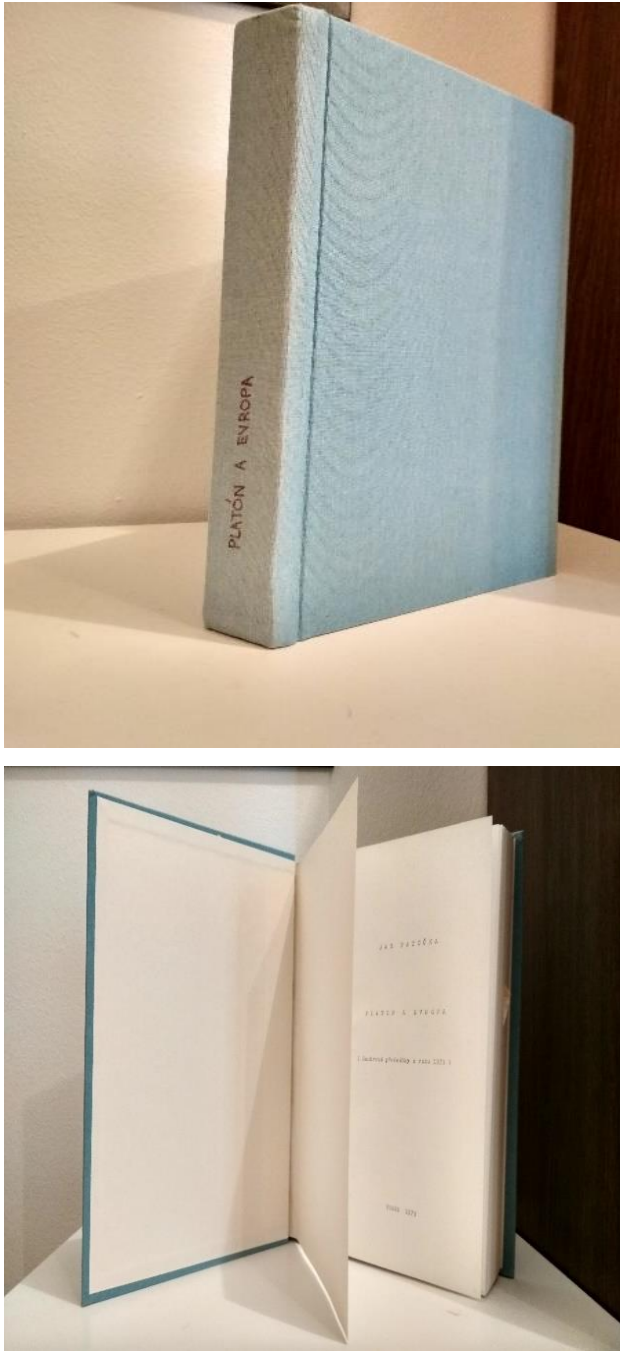


Fig. 3.1.: The original samizdat ‘Blue Edition’ of Patočka’s *Plato and Europe*, produced by Ivan Chvatík in 1973. (Author’s copy.)

Horáková’s salons were tracked by the police, specifically for her association with American embassy employees as well as her friendship with other contrarian intellectuals such as the Havel brothers, the actor Pavel Landovský, the film director

Pavel Juráček, the philosopher Milan Machovec, whose Marxist-Christian seminar she attended in the 1960s as his student, and the philosopher Karel Kosík. The police were also prompted by a loyal neighbour who:

pointed out that in the house where he lives, lives also Dr Dana Horáková, at whose place meets, since September 1976 and also in this year, a group of young people, around 20-30 of them, to whom lectures an older citizen with a beard. (...) Comrade [Neighbour] believes – along with other occupants of the house – that these meetings are hostile to our system and the Party's ideology. (KR-802820 MV)

Although the neighbour dates the salon to 1976, the secret police reports suggest that Horáková's salon lasted at least from 1975 until 1977, when the project was taken over by Ivan Havel and moved to his flat on Engels Quay. In 1979, Horáková emigrated to West Germany.

After Jan Patočka's death in 1977, his younger colleagues, most importantly Ladislav Hejdánek, Jiří Němec, and Milan Machovec, developed a project of wider educational enterprise that would 'link [marginalised] teachers with interested potential students' (Hejdánek 1980) and began teaching philosophy on a bigger scale. Among the proposed names, which were colloquially used, was 'Patočka Academy' or 'the University of Jan Patočka' – these terms were used also by the police when referring to seminars, along with the term 'anti-university'. Eventually, as Hejdánek wrote in an open letter in 1980 (Hejdánek 1980), only Machovec initiated his seminar. The project was, however, ephemeral due to the intense involvement of the secret police, which forced Machovec to cancel it.

The end of this seminar, however, was – at least according to Hejdánek (1980) – an impulse for another group which became important in establishing international connections of unofficial philosophers. Machovec's colleague, Julius Tomin, a former PhD candidate at the Academy of Czechoslovak Sciences with an intense interest in ancient Greek and Marxist philosophy, began lecturing in his home to what remained of the Machovec seminar. At that time, Tomin worked as a turbine mechanic at a Prague waterworks, and later took up the job of night watchman in the Prague zoo. Being a signatory of the Charter 77, an important petition against violations of civil rights in Czechoslovakia, and the husband of Zdena Tominová, one of the spokespersons for Charter signatories, Tomin was under close surveillance of the police. The situation was

further exacerbated by his provocative strategies which led to repeated arrests.

Emphasising the legality of his seminars, Tomin disregarded any precautions, which, as one of my interviewees noted, was ‘technically right but really not practical’ (interview 3), frequently wrote letters to top state representatives requesting recognition of his seminar, and visited state institutions.

Later, after the police activity became unbearable, the seminar moved to the flat of Ivan Dejmal, a former political prisoner and 1968 student activist, and, in 1979, to the flat of a Czech Technical University student, Vladimír Prajzler. Here, Tomin lectured, occasionally together with the literary theorist Miroslav Drozda and the theologian Jakub Trojan, to a group of Prajzler’s university co-students and friends, usually around 20 people. The seminars were usually tied to the theme of ancient Greek philosophy, on which Tomin purported to be the foremost expert in the country. But Tomin and his wife Zdena Tominova also linked the nonconformist student group to the Charter 77 movement and had participants occasionally briefed on the current situation in the movement, raising the suspicions of the police, which had Prajzler and others from the group eventually expelled from the university.

While teaching at Prajzler’s flat, Tomin had also another project that drew the attention of the state apparatus. On 20 May 1978, Tomin and Ivan Dejmal sent out copies of a letter titled *We Seek Scientific Connections* to four iconic academic institutions: Harvard, Oxford, Heidelberg, and the Frei Universität Berlin. A copy of the Czech version of this two-page letter, intercepted by the Czechoslovak secret police (KR-705731 MV)⁵, reads:

Dear colleagues,

I write to you to inform you about our work and ask for your collaboration. We live in Czechoslovakia, I and, my friends, and students. It has been about a year since we decided to stop obeying the illegal practice of our establishment, who usurped the right to decide who can study and what they can study, who can lecture and what they can lecture. We decided to study philosophy together(...). As we expected, it did not take long for the employees of the Ministry of the Interior to take an interest. Take interest in their own way. We were taken to many hours long questioning and pressured to stop our study. But our need to work is stronger, and we

⁵ My translation. The police dossier contains only the Czech version of the letter which was later translated into English.

refused (...). [Nonetheless], they come whenever our friends from abroad visit, and our letters stopped coming through. This is the reason why I write to your four universities in this way...

Most of us study English and German, and our intellectual lives are shaped by the literature of your countries. We cannot accept this situation, in which the cultural life of Great Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany had been sealed from us. We cannot travel to you, our passports were taken (...). However, since the lifestyle of our representatives relies on Western goods, our country is open to Westerners. You can travel here and meet us.

What is the sort of topics we would be interested in? (...) There is only one condition – the willingness to come and share about your intellectual pursuits. Because I do not receive any mail from abroad, and my telephone was taken away, we cannot communicate. Let me, therefore suggest, (...) that you come any Wednesday, September to June, 6 pm, to my flat (...).

Dear friends, we will be delighted if you hear this call for academic collaboration, and I look forward to your coming here.

Julius Tomin

Rather than actually initiating a proper academic connection, writing this letter, Tomin most probably hoped to raise consciousness about academic persecution in Eastern Europe and perhaps, by involving academics from the West, to gain leverage in dealing with Czechoslovak state authorities. After all, as is clear from his letter, the invitation was not directed only at philosophers but at everybody with ‘the willingness to come and share’.

While the letters to the USA and Germany were either lost or confiscated by the police, the Oxford letter arrived at the university, where the philosophy sub-faculty decided to respond to Tomin’s call and arrange both academic visits and financial aid to Czechoslovak philosophers. The first Oxford visitor was a sociologist, Steven Lukes, who undertook a scouting trip to explore the situation in Czechoslovakia, and who had known several local intellectuals who spent years abroad in Britain in the late 1960s. Lukes was followed by Kathleen Wilkes, a philosopher from St. Hilda’s College, Oxford who spoke on Aristotle in Prajzler’s place, and on identity in the flat of Radim Palouš (Day 1999). Her success encouraged the Oxford philosophy faculty to set up a foundation, titled Jan Hus Educational Foundation after the Czech medieval preacher and national martyr Jan Hus. Besides academic support, British philosophers helped initially also by publicizing the situation of Czechoslovak philosophers, sometimes by

example – such as when the Master of Oxford’s Balliol College Anthony Kenny and his wife were arrested by the police during their visit and, after interrogation, driven to a forest, where the police officers left them to find their own way by feet to Germany. Over the next decade, several other academics were expelled from Czechoslovakia. Although Tomin was forced to leave the country in 1980, the collaboration between Oxford philosophers and Czechoslovaks continued.

The Jan Hus Educational Foundation sent, over the decade of its existence, several dozen philosophers, political and social scientists to Czechoslovakia (Prague, Brno, later Bratislava), paid regular stipends to Czech dissident intellectuals (the book of records shows as many as 27 individuals with stipends in 1983/4, 29 in 1985/6 and 33 in 1986/7), and organised deliveries of inaccessible books and journals. Besides occasional lectures, Oxford philosophers, in particular Ralph C. S. Walker, Kathleen Wilkes, William Newton-Smith, and Roger Scruton (based at Birkbeck), prepared materials for regular, systematic courses: Analytical philosophy (aimed to introduce current trends in global philosophy, taught mainly by Oxford visitors), and courses on Kant, Plato and Aristotle, prepared in collaboration with Czech philosophers Petr Rezek and Ivan Chvatík who also taught large portions of the courses.

These specialist seminars were seen as particularly successful undertakings, with meticulous guidelines and weekly readings, as can be seen from the first page of the syllabus, prepared by Ralph C. S. Walker, presented below (Fig. 3). It was a rigorous undergraduate course rather than an intellectual salon or a lecture cycle. This was also the work of Petr Rezek, a philosopher with eclectic interests, writing on topics from phenomenology to architecture, opera and performance art, later also a famous critic of unofficial philosophers production, who impressed his students with his devotion and attitude. His role and performances are explored more in-depth in *Chapter 5* and *Chapter 6* of this thesis.

Rezek’s seminar groups on Kant and Plato derived partially from an earlier seminar group assembled by Daniel Kroupa, a former undergraduate student of Jan Patočka. In 1978, Kroupa decided to organise a seminar that would ‘help students acquire basic philosophical education required for individual study of scientific literature, translating, and participation in expert seminars’, as he wrote to JHEF in 1988. His utmost goal was

to familiarize his students with classical Greek philosophy, the works of Husserl and Heidegger and to offer them the 'erudition indispensable for studying the philosophical works of Jan Patočka' (Kroupa, JHEF letter, 7th April 1988).

KANT

KEY: Prol.: Prolegomena
 KdrV: Kritik der reinen Vernunft
 OR: Walker, ed., Kant on Pure Reason (Oxford Readings)
 W: Walker, Kant
 A: KdrV, first edition
 B: KdrV, second edition
 Brackets {} indicate readings that are desirable but optional.

As a general introduction, it would be helpful to read Scruton, Kant.

1. DESCARTES. Are Descartes' doubts really silly? Can he answer them without arguing in a circle?

Descartes, Meditations I-IV {also V and VI}

B. Williams, Descartes, chs. 3 and 7 {also ch. 2}.

2. LEIBNIZ. Why does Leibniz think the world must be as he describes it? Is it really possible to know so much independently of experience?

Leibniz, Discourse on Metaphysics, together with the excerpts from the correspondence with Arnauld, and the piece entitled "Behind Sense and Matter", in the Czech collection.

C.D. Broad, Leibniz: an Introduction, pp. 6-27 {also the rest of ch. 2}. Pp. 6-27 are roughly equivalent to Broad's article in the collection entitled Leibniz edited by H.G. Frankfurt.

3. HUME. It has sometimes been said that Hume's inability to derive the idea of necessary connection from experience only shows the falsity of his earlier claim that every idea is derived from an impression. Is this a fair criticism? If so, where does the idea come from and what justifies us in using it? If not, to what extent are our everyday and scientific beliefs founded on confusion?

Hume, Enquiry concerning Human Understanding, sects. 2-5 and 7.

Stroud, Hume, ch. 4 {also ch. 3}.

4. KANT'S PROBLEM. What exactly did Kant mean by "synthetic a priori"? Why did he think the main question facing philosophy was "How is synthetic a priori knowledge possible"? And why did he think it was possible?

Prol. Preface, and sects. 1-5.

{KdrV, Preface to B; Introduction.}

W ch. 1.

5. GEOMETRY. Was Kant right to think that geometry constitutes a body of synthetic a priori knowledge about space? Might it at least be the case that we know synthetic a priori truths about the space of our visual experience?

Prol. sects. 6-12.

{Prol. sect. 13; KdrV B 40-41.}

Hopkins, in OR.

In the academic year 1980-1981, after finishing the classic Plato unit, Kroupa brought Petr Rezek to the seminar to assist him with teaching Husserl's *Logical Investigations*. As a former student recalled:

it was once every three or four weeks, sometimes on Sundays (...). The style of work was such that we were supposed to read [the book at home] by ourselves and the goal of the evening was to go through one whole *Investigation*. The book comprises seven parts. The sixth part is pretty long. We probably didn't go through it. But in general, we were pretty fast and we read through the Husserl's book in ten or twelve sittings.' (Interview 5)

After finishing Husserl, the group embarked on Heidegger in 1983, to which Kroupa invited Ivan Chvatík, a former PhD student of Patočka who stored and edited his manuscripts, and a member of the collective that translated *Sein und Zeit* (along with Jiří Němec, Pavel Kouba and Miroslav Petříček). Gradually, Rezek and Chvatík took over the seminar, which eventually moved from Kroupa's place. Besides Heidegger, whom Chvatík knew well from Patočka's seminars, he co-taught the Aristotle course, while Rezek worked with the JHEF on Kant and Plato courses.

Daniel Kroupa stood behind another, more expert project, a seminar colloquially called 'Kampademie'. In 1976, Kroupa and Martin Palouš, who had worked together on several translations and briefly convened several debate groups on Plato in Kroupa's home and were stokers in the same boiler room, assembled a group of intellectuals some of whom they knew from Jircháře as well as an unofficial seminar called *Kecanda* [Chitchat], convened by Patočka's son in law Jan Sokol and visited dominantly by attendees of Jircháře (Kroupa, Daniel Drápal, Tomáš Halík, Václav Žák, Zdeněk Neubauer). The seminar's name, Kampademie, was a play on words combining the terms Kampa, the quarter in Prague where meetings were based at Palouš's house, and 'akademie', the Czech word for the academy, which referred to classic Greek Plato's Academy.

Kampademie was regularly visited, besides Kroupa and Palouš, by Radim Palouš (Martin Palouš's father), Pavel Bratinka, Helena Weberová, Zdeněk Neubauer, Ivan Havel and, to a lesser extent, Václav Havel, whose famous jail essays *Letters to Olga* [Listy Olze] were, in fact, correspondence with Kampademie rather than his wife Olga Havlová. Besides classical philosophy, Kampademie had a strong tendency towards

Christian thought, partially religious mysticism (Castaneda), as well as conservative political science and economy, emphasised particularly by Bratinka (Voegelin, Popper, Hayek), and the work of Jan Patočka. A collection of seminars on Patočka and Voegelin were also recorded, transcribed, and published in Britain in 1988, edited by R. Palouš under nom de plume T. R. Korder (to phonetically resemble ‘the recorder’).

Interestingly, although the police closely watched the development of the project, which also hosted Western intellectuals such as Charles Taylor and Paul Ricoeur, they saw the bright side of these intellectual meetings – they kept philosophers from enticing the young or writing political pamphlets. In June 1984, an officer noted that ‘so far, the mentioned academy demonstrates no hostile tendencies [towards the regime] and results in distracting [the Object] and other activists from the CHARTER.’

The general right-wing and conservative orientation of Kampademie was not exceptional and was shared also by another seminar group, convened by Rudolf Kučera. This group met in Kučera’s flat at Valdštejnské Sq. in Prague, often for lectures by Western visitors sent by JHEF. The conservatism of this group, which included, besides Kučera, also Alena Hromádková, Pavel Bratinka, and Petr Pithart, was in solid agreement with the political orientation of Jan Hus Educational Foundation, headed by the conservative philosopher Roger Scruton. The reader will find more on this conservative tendency among unofficial philosophers in *Chapter 7*.

While Czech dissent was generally anti-Communist, the right-wing or politically conservative orientation cannot be generalised. Although the thoughts of conservative and neo-conservative intellectuals resonated in the unofficial sphere, often particularly those informed by Christian thought tradition, many of the central actors of the unofficial sphere were left-leaning – for example Petr Uhl or Ivan Dejmal who belonged to the radical left-wing student group *Hnutí revoluční mládeže* [Revolutionary Youth Movement] were jailed between 1969 and 1973. Ivan Dejmal closely collaborated with Julius Tomin, and later regularly visited, for example, Ivan Havel’s salon. Other important actors, such as Ladislav Hejdínek, also leaned to various articulations of the leftist position.

Leftist intellectuals had also their role in the networks of unofficial seminars. For example, a seminar convened by the Marxist philosopher Milan Machovec together

with the Protestant theologian Milan Balabán and the Maoist philosopher Egon Bondy took place in the flat of Miroslav Vodrážka and Iva Vodrážková in Templová from 1980. Here, this troika of prominent dissident intellectuals took turns in introducing a rather counter-cultural, ‘underground’ audience to various philosophical topics. The tradition of these seminars was initiated by a Slovak-Jewish philosopher Maximilán Durenfeld, an outsider philosopher who, according to one of his letters intercepted by the police in 1980, produced 21 tomes of philosophical work, advocating ‘struggle against all old religions and churches’, ‘Western democracy and its capitalism’, as well as ‘Eastern communism’ (KR-725175 MV). The seminar convened by Machovec, Bondy, and Balabán can be seen as a direct continuation of the 1960s tradition of Machovec’s own seminar, with the three philosophers collectively exploring the boundaries between Marxism and religious theologies. Miroslav Vodrážka and Iva Vodrážková later hosted also a phenomenology seminar by Miroslav Petříček.



Figure 3 3.: The seminar in Miroslav Vodrážka’s flat, the 1980s, convened by Milan Machovec (centre) and Milan Balabán (right). (Courtesy of M. Vodrážka.)

Milan Balabán, a participant at Jircháře, was an important figure also for the JHEF, as he led the most formalised seminar, accredited by the University of Cambridge. Roger Scruton and his collaborators in the JHEF sought for a long time official endorsement of a British institution which would grant formal status to some of the Prague seminars. After failed negotiations with the Open University in London, a successful agreement

was found with Cambridge, which offered a ‘Cambridge Religious Studies Diploma and Certificate’ course, prepared by Andrew Lenox-Conyngham. Lenox-Conyngham commenced the course, which was frequented by twelve participants and convened by Balabán, in September 1988. First papers were submitted in 1989. The course ran until the 1990s despite significant dropout after the Velvet Revolution, and several of the original twelve students eventually obtained the Diploma qualification. The JHEF associates who lectured to this group were generally impressed with Balabán’s teaching ability and the level of his students. They were, however, concerned with their writing ability, as essays and papers were not standard assessment techniques at Czech universities. As Lenox-Conyngham reported to the JHEF board, he

got the impression that the basic knowledge of most candidates (...) is quite impressive and far deeper than that shown by many of the candidates whose scripts I have marked when I examined (...). I think the main difficulty, as stated above, will be not that of intellectual capacity or knowledge of the topic but of examination technique (Lenox-Conyngham, JHEF Report, 1988).

Jan Hus Educational Foundation was not the only Western organisation supporting Czech intellectuals. Another similar project appeared, under the name Jan Hus Educational and Cultural Fund [JHECF], in the USA and, importantly, in France, where the organisation adopted the name Association Jan Hus [AJH]. While the JHEF and JHECF were explicitly connected, with the JHEF members being the initiators behind the American organisation, Association Jan Hus, created in 1981 by Jacques Derrida and Jean-Paul Vernant, who became the vice-president and the president respectively, operated independently of their British counterparts, and collaborated mainly with Dutch supporters of the Czech dissent, organised by Henri Veldhuis, a theology student. Jacques Derrida visited Czechoslovakia in 1982 and, after lecturing to Ladislav Hejdánek’s seminar, was arrested by the police before boarding the plane from Prague and charged with drug trafficking (Ap, 1982).

Ladislav Hejdánek’s seminar, to which Derrida lectured, was a project that was closely associated with the French and Dutch initiatives, as well as the British JHEF. Hejdánek, the doyen of Czech unofficial philosophy (engaged in various projects since the late 1940s) associated in some way with many other undertakings, initiated his own project in 1980 explicitly as a continuation of the seminar group convened by Tomin who had left the country earlier that year. The seminar ran without interruption until the Velvet

Revolution, albeit often broken up by the police. Similarly to Tomin, Hejdánek insisted on the public character of his seminars, and in 1984 even initiated an unsuccessful dialogue with the authorities to formalise his project. Over the decade, Hejdánek convened several courses, such as Philosophical Cosmology (1984-1985), Faith as a Cosmic Agent (1985-1986), Ethics (1986-1987) and Political Philosophy (1989).

Besides educational activities, Hejdánek also attempted to maintain an alternative system of philosophy as a scientific process. In the 1970s, he initiated a samizdat edition *OIKOÚMENÉ*, which published unofficial philosophy, and in 1985 the samizdat philosophy journal *Reflexe* [Reflections]. Both the edition and the journal still exist today, also thanks to Hejdánek's closest student Aleš Havlíček who directed and edited the projects after 1989. *Reflexe* was not the only samizdat journal – it had a sister publication *Paraf: Paralelní akta filosofie* [Paraf: The Parallel Review of Philosophy] published by the Catholic dissident Václav Benda. Other important journals were *Kritický sborník* [The Critical Review] and the short-lived *Polemos* published by Rudolf Kučera who, with his circle, later launched also the review *Střední Evropa* [Central Europe], focused on neo-conservative political philosophy. These journals offered a free platform for intellectual exchange between philosophers and intellectuals who could not (or would not) publish their contributions in official journals such as *Filosofický časopis* [The Philosophy Review].

Finally, a similarly long-running and well-institutionalised educational enterprise was Ivan Havel's *Mondays*, which were a continuation of Dana Horánová's salon which she cancelled when she emigrated in 1979. Unlike Hejdánek's seminars, however, Havel's Mondays were an eclectic programme, cutting across various fields from philosophy, theology and literature to computer science and robotics. Their model was similar to Horánová's project – rather than a systematic and structured course such as the projects of Hejdánek or Kroupa, Havel's Mondays were informal social events facilitated by a lecture and subsequent debate. The model of the seminar was to offer a motley stream of various performers to a non-conformist audience.

Conclusion

This chapter reconstructed the history of unofficial seminars, the majority of which were organised between the early 1970s and 1989. I have shown that the history of unofficial seminars can be directly related to two intellectual projects, the Jircháře platform and Machovec's dialogical seminar. Together, these projects dovetailed the influences of Christian theology, humanist Marxism, and phenomenology. As I demonstrate in *Chapters 6 and 7*, these traditions provided crucial symbolic reservoirs from which unofficial philosophers drew the meanings and scripts for their performances. In other words, seminar performances were not created ex nihilo but concocted from symbols that unofficial intellectuals learned to develop and manipulate in these early projects.

As this chapter demonstrates, unofficial seminars were not an entirely new phenomenon in the 1970s. They drew on an existing tradition. Figures such as Jan Patočka, Ladislav Hejdlánek, Milan Machovec or Milan Balabán, who attracted groups of non-conformist students in the post-1968 era, were performers who had honed their skills for decades before they peaked in their ability as unofficial conveners. This is perhaps the reason why they were able to quickly draw the attention of others in the non-conformist framework. Already in the early years of the normalisation era, they had a well-developed ability of charismatic performance. Other central figures of the unofficial philosophy seminars of the late 1970s and the 1980s were the members of their former official and unofficial audiences, such as Daniel Kroupa, Ivan Chvatík, and Petr Rezek (Patočka) or Dana Horáková and Julius Tomin (Machovec). Not only were these figures close to the original charismatics, but they also learned from them the scripts of the trade and the central symbols of the tradition. However, they each learned these scripts and symbols in a different way. While some interpreted the tradition critically (such as Rezek or Tomin), others became its guardians (Kroupa, Chvatík).

Before discussing these scripts and symbols, however, it is necessary to examine the social world that unofficial philosophers inhabited – especially the ways in which their lives were shaped by the socialist state and its police. Therefore, in the next chapter, I continue my historical excursion and explore in detail the strategies used by the police to discourage and observe the people who organised unofficial seminars. I argue that the

Czechoslovak non-conformist network was thoroughly destabilised by the police, which targeted it with a combination of direct and indirect strategies of intervention and surveillance. This insight is particularly important for answering the first and the second research questions, which are concerned with the motivation for participation in unofficial seminars and the meanings underpinning them. The next chapter paints a picture of a world in which participants in unofficial seminars had to be always mindful of possible consequences of their actions for their careers and studies. Importantly, it was a world in which intellectuals could credibly claim that their philosophy was a force that exposed the innate immorality of the socialist state – because the state seemed to be doing what it could to stop them from teaching it.

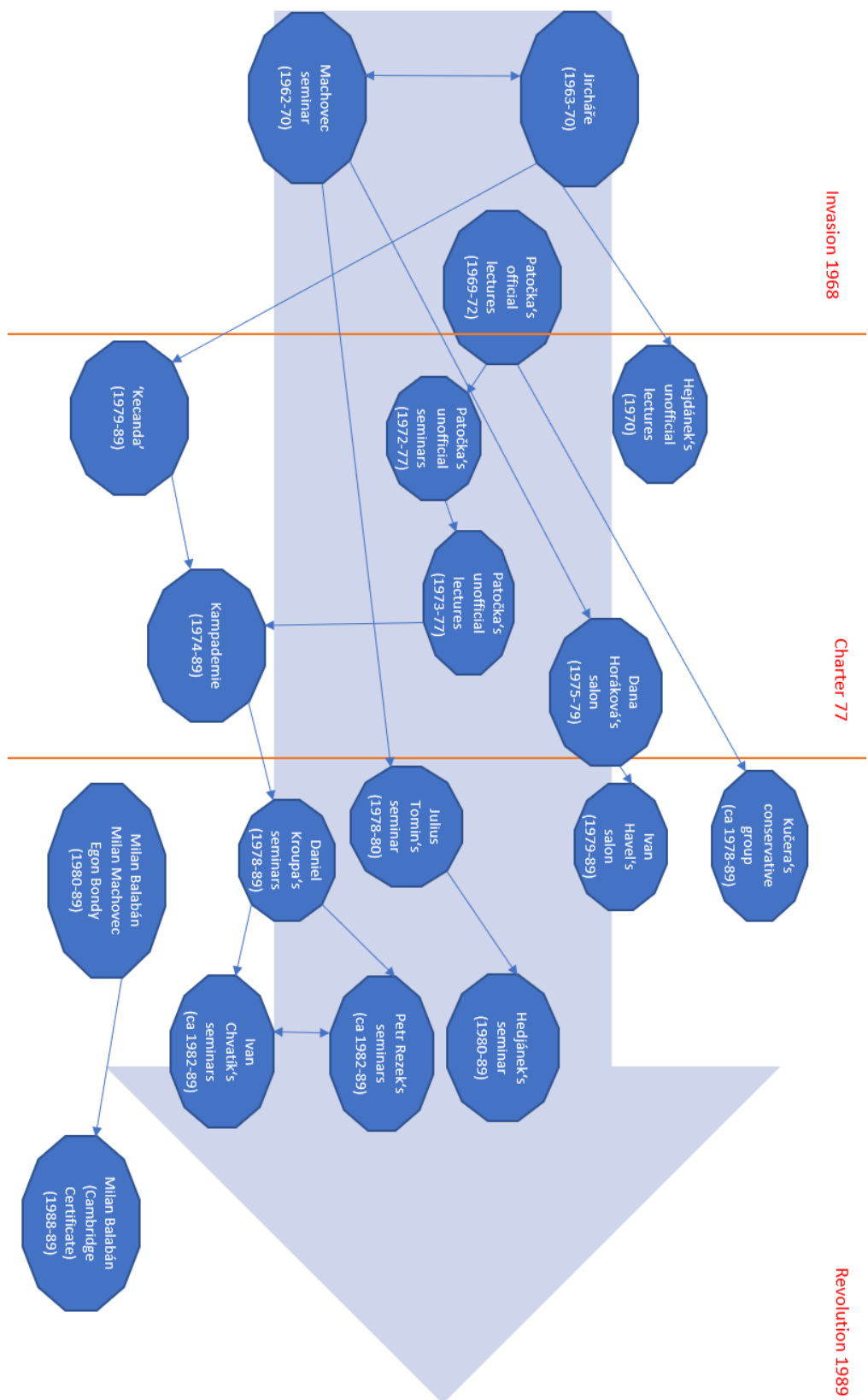


Fig. 3.4.: An overview of the most important seminars discussed in this thesis.

CHAPTER 4: The Deconstruction of Certainty: The Secret Police and Prague's Non-Conformist Network

In the world of our boyhood, the cop was what somewhere else would be an evil ghost. In our imagination, he was not present as a concrete, real threat (...) but he was the embodiment of the mysterious, terrifying power which encircled us, kids and later schoolchildren, in this land of wraiths, which called itself the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Husák, whose ghastly face looked down on us every day from the walls of classrooms, was a surreal all-powerful kingpin, and the cops were horrifying in that they were lackeys of such demons – backed up by their invisible, all-encompassing and all-pervading power.

(Placák, 2007: 8)

In sociological analyses of intellectuals, there tend to be only two forms of anxiety – over resources and over prestige. For Bourdieu (1990), intellectuals struggle to fulfil the goals instilled in them through socialisation and inscribed in the structure of their habitus. Occasionally, they can strive upwards, against those whose habitus renders them better for academic or intellectual careers in the eyes of selection committee members. According to Collins, what intellectuals strive for is a major position in the attention space (Collins, 1998). Even more recent works (Bartmanski, 2012; Bortolini and Cossu, 2019) focus mainly on intellectuals as concerned with strategies to acquire prestige and the power or resources it brings. Put simply, would-be intellectuals worry about becoming intellectuals, and when they succeed, they can start to worry about how to remain intellectuals and continue to enjoy their privileged status. This is not surprising, given that all intellectuals whom the studies above examined, lived in societies that were not principally opposed to their pursuits – and if they were, then intellectuals succeeded in leaving these societies for better prospects abroad (the case of Małinowski in Bartmanski, 2012). Not all intellectuals, however, live or lived in such fortunate circumstances.

Intellectuals in socialist countries were, of course, among those less lucky. As Lipset and Dobson note in their study of American and Soviet intellectuals (1972), in the USSR, one of the reasons for dissent was that ‘scientists and other scholars are loath to permit the party’s persistent surveillance of their intellectual work and personal lives’ and ‘resent limitation on their right to engage freely in inquiry’ (Lipset and Dobson, 1972: 162). But what was the actual nature of this surveillance in socialist countries? As I show in this chapter, the nature of police intervention in Czechoslovakia went beyond limitations on freedom of inquiry into active involvement in non-conformists’ lives. I argue that the network of Czechoslovak non-conformists in Prague was destabilised by constant interventions of the secret police, which deliberately disturbed and discouraged individuals, as well as disrupted their social relations. In this environment, trust was undermined and actors were often left to wonder whether their social relations, friendships, and even intellectual conflicts were authentic or staged by the police. This is something that I regard as important especially when addressing the first research question, concerning the reasons for participation in unofficial seminars, as without exposing the ways in which the stakes were raised in the non-conformist network, it cannot be appreciated how difficult it was to create and maintain these groups.

In the next sections, I discuss the general problem of distrust in state socialist countries with strong presence of the secret police, such as Czechoslovakia, in which citizens lived under constant impression of state control. Then I examine more closely the non-conformist network that struggled to survive in this landscape, threatened by both tangible and intangible forms of police control and harassment. This description is necessary to understand the extent of uncertainty and, by implication, the appeal of unofficial philosophers who, as I will argue in the later chapters of my thesis, despite pervasive police surveillance and oppression were able to entice non-conformist actors and turn them into interested and devoted audiences. At the same time, the dismal conditions of harassment provide the background for understanding why grandiloquent formulations replete with powerful symbols such as truth or authenticity were so eagerly received. Instead, the palpable presence of state forces turned them into effective vehicles for critique and emancipation.

Distrust and Uncertainty In Socialist Czechoslovakia

The countries of the Eastern Bloc were notorious for monitoring and restricting their populations with the extensive bureaucratic system, in which ‘no decision above the level of the family’ was taken outside the bureaucratic office (Rigby, 1970: 5) as well as the forces of state military power and security services. As the trite Orwellian slogan has it, Big Brother was watching everyone (Orwell, 1961). According to Richterova, however, the research on Eastern European secret police has been so far surprisingly limited (Richterova, 2018). Nonetheless, there seems to be a general consensus ‘that Communist surveillance and political control were detrimental to social trust’ (Svenonius and Björklund, 2018: 125). According to Sztompka, discussing the case of Poland, ‘one of the components and consequences of [the Eastern] bloc culture was the widespread erosion of trust’ (Sztompka, 2000: 153). This erosion of trust was generated especially by the ‘despotic or paternalistic style of politics’ in which ‘citizens were subjected to voluntaristic and arbitrary policies’ (Sztompka, 2000: 154).

The immediate sociological reference for a society under such pervasive social control is Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1995). Here, the author famously argued that modern society abolished cruel, spectacular forms of punishment in favour of a system that through constant control produces tame and disciplined populations. Particularly well-known is Foucault’s concept of panopticon, a dystopian prison designed by the Bentham brothers, in which the inmates live under constant fear of possible control from the overseer who could be monitoring them through gauzy walls at any time. Foucault’s understanding of the penal system was, however, criticised – for example for his neglect of the bureaucratic dimension and the role of the police dossier, as well as his disregard for the historicity of the concept of the panopticon itself (Murakami Wood, 2007). Others pertinently noted that prison ‘is not directed at training and deploying bodies for a capitalist system in need of docile labour’ (Kohler-Hausmann, 2018: 8). Rather, it ‘aims at identifying and segregating the dangerous from laborious classes’ (ibid.).

Unsurprisingly, the concept of the panopticon has been applied to Eastern European socialism, with some authors arguing that ‘the scope of surveillance was close to a perfect panoptic system’ (Svenonius et al., 2014: 101). But is it really such a precise

description? After all, panoptical systems do not, for example, put the overseers themselves under scrutiny. Socialism, however, did, and as the authors note, in Eastern Europe, even the ‘surveilling parts – militia and [police] officers – could never be sure that they were not being monitored by other agents’ (Svenonius et al., 2014: 101). Moreover, Richterova argued that the recent scholarship is turning from the image of an omnipotent secret service to an understanding of the state terror as highly selective (Richterova, 2018). According to Tomek, there are often ‘far-fetched impressions of the possibilities and capabilities of the [secret police]’ (Tomek, 2016: 91) especially due to its own effort to inflate its effectiveness, ‘which naturally involved serving a selective and idealised account of its operations to the public’ (ibid.). The author concludes, however, that the presentations were successful in terrifying the society: ‘secrecy and the presentation of results created fear and the impression of an organisation that was more powerful than it actually was – an organisation with practically unlimited possibilities’ (Tomek, 2016: 91).

The activity of the secret police was therefore targeted and restricted, although it itself was represented in the public party-controlled media such as the newspaper *Rudé právo* [The Red Right] as an omnipresent power. Moreover, it was not a power that would discipline merely by its gaze. As is known from classic works of dissident memoir (e.g. Benda, 2018; Kohout, 2016), and as will become clear through this chapter, the police used various techniques of direct and indirect involvement to force or entice actors to withdraw from the network of non-conformist actors and/or provide information about their friends and acquaintances. It is perhaps a historical paradox that the police created something similar to what researchers described for decades with regards to the African-American community in the US (Ragsdale, 2000). They produced what Alice Goffman described in her recent research of the Philadelphia ghetto succinctly as ‘a climate of fear and suspicion in which people are pressured to inform on one another’ (Goffman, 2009: 341). Similarly to Goffman’s ‘men on the run’, Czechoslovak non-conformists spent a great deal of their time evading the police as well as any contact with official institutions which could at any time turn dangerous.

This similarity, however, is superficial. First, the Czechoslovak non-conformists were not discriminated against on racial grounds. Neither was the police interference structural, spanning generations, as quite a few of the non-conformist network members

came from a culturally and socially privileged background. They found themselves marginalised due to their political activism, or the political activism of their parents. However, I see the main difference in their relation to the actual legality of their practice. While actors living in (more or less) democratic countries are often cognizant of the actual illegal nature of their activity, non-conformists in totalitarian states are seldom sure whether they are actually breaking a rule or not. Indeed, Czechoslovak non-conformists were usually more or less certain that they would not end up in prison for more than a few hours, or in the worst-case scenario, two days. Yet, they did not know what sort of internal politics or international situation might set the police into a paranoid spiral and tighten the screws of social control. Unlike criminals who tend to know where the lines are drawn – such as that selling drugs is punishable by law – unofficial philosophers and their students, on the other hand, knew that they did not break any explicit laws, although the police did label their seminars explicitly ‘illegal’ in their reports. Despite the legality of their meetings, the non-conformists were usually uncertain about possible criminalisation of their activity or harassment. Even being involved in a case that would be later dismissed by the court was possibly detrimental to one’s educational or career efforts.

As I will demonstrate in the next section, it was a combination of four police strategies that put the non-conformist network into an extremely precarious situation. The actors who constituted it were living under threat of violence and disruption, with a feeling that they could be under observation anytime, and that their activities might be constantly recorded. Some were forced out of their social relations and were distrustful of those ties that they managed to keep. Their plans and activities were betrayed to the police with actors left to guess who passed on the information. Scholarly manuscripts and recordings, into which months and years of effort went, were confiscated with slim chances of them ever being returned. In other words, it was a thoroughly unstable network. Rather than prove that this network was entirely lacking trust and solidarity, which indeed no network can be, I set the background for further analysis, presented in *Chapters 5, 6, and 7*. What was the extent of destabilisation that the network had to overcome for almost two decades?

Between Intervention and Subornation: Destabilising Strategies of The Secret Police

This section explores in depth four strategies that the police used to undermine the stability of the non-conformist network – direct intervention, observation, prophylaxis, and subornation. It was a combination of these four strategies that created the intense atmosphere of terror and distrust. The members of the non-conformist framework did not have to worry only about being arrested or questioned but had to be always mindful about possible observation, as well as the fact that their friends and acquaintances might be working for the police. The police were so effective in undermining trust among the non-conformists because it did not use only one tactic, but because it dovetailed both direct and indirect strategies, simple and complex plots, in order to create a pervasive atmosphere of fear and uncertainty.

Direct Interventions

Direct intervention refers to the actions of the police that required the physical presence of an officer and active communication with the non-conformist actors. The exemplary strategy of the direct intervention was breaking up the event, arrest or police questioning. Although none of my interviewees experienced violence, there were incidents of direct police intervention that were violent (e.g. the case of the ‘Budejovice Massacre’, a mass use of violence against musicians and music enthusiasts in 1974, in Hagen, 2019: 67).

The extent to which the police directly intervened in the process of unofficial education varied over the course of the 1970s and 80s, depending on the current political (and international) situation, as well as the position of the particular seminar in question. Small-scale, expert seminars such as those convened by Daniel Kroupa, Petr Rezek or Ivan Chvatík, were seldom targeted directly, as they were organised with meticulous secretiveness; the police focused on larger undertakings such as the open lecture series convened by Julius Tomin and Ladislav Hejránek. These groups were targeted for two main reasons: their association with the civil rights movement, especially the Charter

77, and their connection to Western institutions such as the British Jan Hus Educational Foundation or the French Association Jan Hus.

The police were particularly concerned that these groups could become potential gateways, which would provide young people with access to the wider network of non-conformists and, ultimately, civil rights activists. This was especially the case for Tomin and Hejdánek who, being demonstratively open to the public, drew some audience members from beyond the usual set of non-conformist actors. Both Tomin and Hejdánek were, at the same time, closely affiliated with the Charter 77, with the latter being a spokesperson of the Charter between 1977 and 1978, as was Tomin's wife Zdena Tominova between 1977 and 1978. Especially after the initial emergence of the Charter 77, the police were concerned that unofficial seminars could become spaces where their texts, as well as pamphlets and petitions, would be disseminated. According to the following police report from one of Tomin's seminars, their concerns were well-grounded:

The Source participated in a meeting (...) [where] the main lecturer was (...) currently the spokesperson of the Charter 77. (...) [The spokesperson] told the participants that they should join forces with the Charter. A debate unravelled, for example, after [a student's] question whether the CH 77 could influence young people through music (...). [The spokesperson] answered that he should try doing something himself (...). [The spokesperson] later followed up on this interest in music. [They] mentioned that in 7 Ječná St on the top floor live the NĚMEC siblings who are "somehow" interested in music and that if the participants pay them a visit and refer to [the spokesperson], they will be welcomed as family. (KR-698842 MV)

It was exactly this type of encounter that the police were concerned about. Not only did Tomin's seminar become a place where the students met with flesh-and-blood Charter 77 representatives, but they also received invitations to the inner circle of non-conformist counter-culture. Indeed, the Němec siblings mentioned by the spokesperson were not just some music enthusiasts, but the children of Jiří Němec, a prominent Charter 77 signatory and an unofficial intellectual. The flat his extended family occupied on 7 Ječná St was one of the central spaces of Prague's unofficial life.

The second important reason for direct intervention was the presence of foreign academics. Particularly in the first years after Julius Tomin established the connection with Oxford University's philosophy faculty, the police were keenly interested but

rather clueless about the purpose of those visits. Unwilling to accept the explanation of academic support, they interpreted the project of the Jan Hus Educational Foundation as a ‘centre of ideological diversion’, whose purpose, according to a secret police report, was

sending emissaries (...) under the pretence of tourism. They are mainly British citizens – lecturers at British universities who, in the milieu of the internal enemy⁶ in Czechoslovakia, lecture and consult with hostile individuals, especially signatories of the CH-77, the further objectives of their belligerent activities. (KR-829108 MV)

With regard to unofficial philosophy, direct police intervention usually took the form of terminating the seminar. This means that identified police officers arrived at the scene, requested to be let into the flat, pronounced the gathering illegal and collected participants’ identification documents. Some would usually be taken to the station for further questioning, where they were often told that the meetings ‘violate the process of education of university students’ and that ‘participation of students [in the seminar] contravenes the university student vows’ (KR-698842 MV), as the police admonished one of Tomin’s students in their questioning, and warned that further continuation of the activity would bear severe consequences.

In some cases, Western academics were themselves directly involved in police interventions. Especially in the early phase of the Oxford-Prague connection, some of them were arrested and deported. One of the imprisoned and expelled academics was William Newton-Smith of Oxford University, apprehended on 8 March 1980. One of the participants described the direct police intervention in a protest letter to the attorney general. The letter was archived in the non-conformist’s police file:

After 7 pm, about eight police officers in uniforms and two in civil dress entered the flat. The officers in civil dress did not identify themselves, did not provide any document authorising them to enter our flat and, when asked what they wanted, answered: “we will not discuss that with you.” The officer in the civil dress who seemed to be in charge of the intervention ordered the policemen to request identification documents from the people present and note them down. After identifying the professor, the abovementioned officer turned and ordered Dr Julius Tomin to translate to the professor William Newton-Smith that he must take his belongings and follow them. Dr Tomin answered that he would do such a thing only if asked politely, [and said] that he was not a

⁶ By the ‘milieu of internal enemy’ the police refers to the general non-conformist network.

subordinate police employee (...). Then the officer in the civil dress raised his voice into shouting, asking the professor (...) several times in Czech (...). The professor did not indeed understand the Czech order (...). The officer in the civil dress then ordered the policemen: "Take him!" (...). Policemen then took the professor (...) without offering one word of explanation or at least providing us ex-post with any proof of legal authorization of their actions. (KR-829108 MV)

In other cases, the police did not have to break up the seminar because they paid a visit to the Western academic in a different setting to prevent them from visiting the unofficial seminar in the first place. This was the case of John Hale, an academic scheduled to talk on nationalism to Ladislav Hejránek's group in 1985, as he explained in his report to the Jan Hus Educational Foundation:

At about 6.15 p.m. while we were changing before setting off for the meeting on the 19th, [there was] a knock at the door, and three men who said they were police and who showed me their I.D.'s when I asked them to. I invited them in, and their spokesman said that it would be very unwise of me to go to Mr H's; that if I wished to lecture, I should not have pretended to be a tourist and should have approached the Charles University. (...) He said if I insisted, we would find our visit terminated in a not very happy way (John Hale, Report to JHEF, 1985).

To avoid deportation, Hale, as he notes in the JHEF report, decided to give up debating the policemen, and desisted from attending the seminar, 'uncertain how [his] turning up would further complicate [Hejránek's] position' (ibid.)

Direct interventions were particularly common as a part of the wider police operation *Asanace* [Sanitation], which lasted between 1977 and 1984, and aimed to force the actors of the non-conformist framework to emigrate. One of the well-known cases concerning unofficial philosophy was Julius Tomin, an object of extraordinary attention (his dossier contains more than 4500 pages) who left Czechoslovakia for Oxford in 1980. The reason why the Tomin family ultimately decided to leave was that Tomin's wife Zdena Tominova was attacked and injured, supposedly by undercover police officers – although Tomin's police dossier does not give a clear answer whether this suspicion was true, and the police officers themselves seemed bewildered about this accusation. In sum, over 280 Charter 77 signatories (out of 1886 total) left the country due to police interventions (Navara, 2010).

Observation

The police, however, often did not intervene directly but restricted itself to meticulous control of non-conformists and their observation. The objective was to gather information about the mobilisation potential of the non-conformist network, as well as to gather material for further legal prosecution. Unsurprisingly, widespread surveillance was a potential source of anxiety and uncertainty among the actors who participated in the networks of unofficial philosophy. As the secret police noted, for example, in a report on a case of one non-conformist who participated in Hejdánek's seminars, '[his] nerves are very bad and he suffers from neurosis. Lately, he developed a fear of being alone in his flat and suffers from the feeling of being constantly followed' (KR-831775 MV). His partner was affected in a similar way and confided in a friend, who was a police informer, that

they wish to isolate him from the others, make them avoid him. [She] hates when the police sniff around in their privacy, it strongly affects her, and now she feels she is absolutely down, she thinks that the police have really outdone themselves this time. (KR-831775 MV)

With regard to unofficial seminars, I distinguish two general types of observation, direct and indirect, depending on whether the police carried out the surveillance themselves or used some sort of proxy. By proxy, I mean a human or non-human agent used to acquire access to the non-conformist's private spaces or collect information for the police.

Direct observation was relatively common, especially with regard to the open, wider seminar groups and particularly those that hosted foreign visitors – Julius Tomin's and Ladislav Hejdánek's seminars, the groups convened by Egon Bondy, Milan Machovec, and Milan Balabán, or the political philosophy group organised by Alena Hromádková and Rudolf Kučera. Instead of directly entering the scene, the police observed participants entering the building from the street or in (often unidentified) vehicles. The picture below (Fig. 4.1.) presents an example of the observation of Miroslav Vodrážka's flat. Here, we can see how the residence, an important place in the non-conformist network, was surrounded so that no one would enter or leave unidentified:

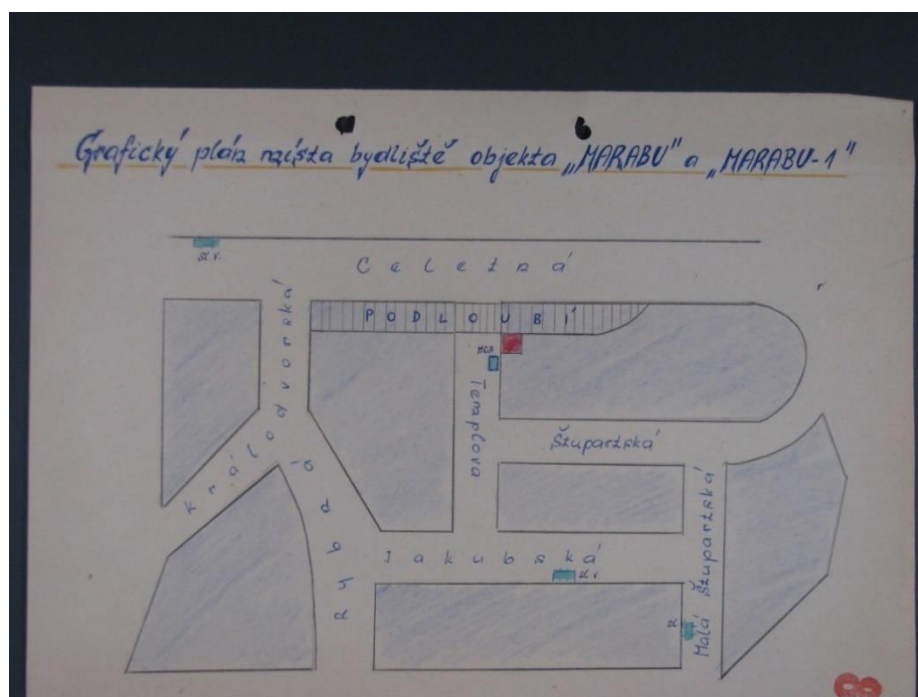


Fig 4.1.: A document titled 'Blueprint of the place of residence of the object "Marabu" and "Marabu-1"', pertaining to the surveillance of Miroslav Vodrážka and his wife Iva Vodrážková, with the large rectangle spot being the location of the flat and the smaller rectangles above and beneath it representing police vehicles.

Another example from the secret police files, a report concerning the wife of a prominent unofficial philosopher, demonstrates that the feeling of being observed was, over time, becoming something that non-conformists were used to and expected. As her friend, and a police informer, told the officers:

She said her husband was, in principle, a homebody who never goes anywhere and hence does not really provoke the police to any further action. (...) She is relieved when she returns from her work and she sees the TATRA 603⁷ vehicle in front of their building. That means that [her husband] is home and that they are watching him. The police see him off to work and escort him from work. [The couple] thinks it must cost [the state] a lot of money. (KR-831775 MV)

It is necessary to add that the wife was 'relieved' when she, returning from her job, saw the police car in front of the building not because her husband was being observed, but because that meant he was home and not in prison again.

In some cases, observing officers also pursued and followed seminar participants, resulting sometimes in nervous hide-and-seek with the police. One participant in a lecture, given by the Czech-born philosopher Ernest Gellner, recalls such an incident:

⁷ Tatra 603 was an iconic Czechoslovak secret police vehicle.

I remember this one time, when Ernest Gellner was here. I knew he stayed with some sociologist from the Academy [of Sciences]. I didn't approve of that, but it was his choice. Well, [he] had his lecture in my flat and I kept looking out of the window to see if someone was not there [watching us]. Suddenly, I saw a car. It clearly was the secret police. So, I told Gellner and he panicked. He supposed they were following him, but he didn't want to lead them to that sociologist [from the Academy] whom he stayed with. As we found out later, it was, actually, [that sociologist] who alerted the police. It was always like that. I said that the only way I could help is that we simply go out, get in the car, and that I would try to lose them. He said it was impossible, we couldn't possibly do that. I said that I knew Prague well, and that I was a good driver so that we might give it a shot. So, there was a car chase (...) but, eventually, I lost them. He was completely horrified, he never experienced anything like that. A gentleman, professor Ernest Gellner, in a Trabant, in Prague, in the night. He said: 'I survived the war, but I thought I wouldn't survive this' (interview 1).

Another British visitor remembers with humour that although the police followed him, the officers conformed to the stereotype of disinterested Eastern European state employees. 'I was followed', he said, 'but in a very Czech manner: from 8 am to 4 pm, when the officer's shift was probably over' (interview 15).

Contrary to direct strategies, indirect observation did not involve the immediate presence of police officers. A common strategy was to plant listening devices in the places of residence or wiretapping telephones. There was a major obstacle to this practice, as the police had to first acquire access into the homes of the actors without their knowledge. The officers, therefore, had to be inventive and devise strategies such as, for example, the unnecessary medical exam described in the report below:

The objective [of the interview] was to ponder the possibility to summon the object of the operation "DOKTOR" to Vinohrady hospital for a medical examination, that would also serve the purpose of examining the validity of disability pension claim. (...)

[The medical practitioner], after examining the medical records of the 'DOKTOR', readily agreed that he will summon [the object] to his medical facility. The examination itself will be conducted in the [following] manner, that in one room "DOKTOR" will be routinely examined (...) and then he will proceed undressed to a second, separate room, where the (...) they will take an X-ray picture of the spine and pelvis. In the meantime, the officer of VI. S-PMV will acquire imprints of the keys (...). (KR-813002 MV)

Alternatively, the police acquired access from house caretakers, roommates or neighbours. In another case, a philosopher told the JHEF visitor Robert Grant that they

were anxious, since ‘the neighbours had seen unfamiliar electronic equipment being installed into the flat below [the philosopher’s place], into which a ‘lawyer’ had just moved.’ According to Grant, ‘this made conversation difficult and the mention of names impossible’ (Robert Grant, JHEF Report, 1984). This clearly demonstrates the uncertainty, even paranoia – the philosopher could not be sure that the ‘lawyer’ who moved below them was a police collaborator, but it was safer to act as if they were. Incidentally, the police dossier for this particular actor does not include any information about wiretapping through a neighbouring flat.

The following example from the secret police report shows a case in which the police recruited a neighbour to gain access to a flat of an unofficial philosopher:

According to the behaviour and statements of the activist⁸, we conclude that [she] is a trustworthy individual who rejects any oppositional activity and does not identify with the behaviour and statements of [the philosopher]. The activist has the object’s trust (...). [The philosopher] considers [the activist] a nice lady to whom he can always turn if he needs some neighbourly assistance. Using an appropriate background story, it will be, over time, possible [for the activist] to acquire access to [the philosopher’s] flat. (KR-813002 MV)

What is clear here is how an individual’s trust and a sense of solidarity could be used against them. A neighbour or a colleague, once considered a ‘nice’ and trustworthy person, could be recruited to the network of secret police informers, and assist the police in the process of information gathering.

As one of my interviews with a former philosopher, who studied the discipline officially as well as unofficially, suggests, the experience of being observed and controlled was not limited merely to those directly involved in the unofficial part of the Czechoslovak philosophical field. The philosopher recalled that observation was also a feature of official philosophical life:

two of my schoolmates [at the university] were undercover [officers]. It was funny, actually. They were not even trying to keep their cover. Both of them had... the same satchels... with those small pockets, like some first-graders... They might not even have been with the secret police, they were probably just regular cops. They were bored but they had to be there because somebody sent them to... Well, I frankly don’t know why they would send them... This exceeds my imagination. (interview 5)

⁸ A term used by the police to describe willing collaborators.

Among non-conformists, the possibility of being followed, watched, or recorded instilled fear of expressing oneself openly and, as I demonstrated above, the paranoia of being followed. The secret police deconstructed the privacy of communication and free movement. The actors were no longer sure that what they said was confidential and would not be used against them later. For this reason, as British visitors often noted in reports to the JHEF, a great deal of communication inside flats was done in writing, which was immediately disposed of. This fear was well-grounded, as many of them had in mind cases such as that of Jan Procházka, a writer defamed publicly in a propaganda documentary *Svědectví od Seiny* [The Seine Testimony], which contained recordings of his private conversations, in which he made unflattering comments about other intellectuals and politicians. It was broadcast on state television in 1970.

Prophylaxis

The concept of ‘prophylaxis’, phrased in the police reports often also as ‘prophylactic intervention’, was a category that the secret police used for preventive intervention. Rather than from the medical context, its original domain, the police likely adopted it from the vocabulary of contemporary Soviet prognostics, which used the term in the context of the sociology of employment (Kopeček, 2019). Similar to the medical meaning, prophylaxis aimed at preventing social actors from engaging in non-conforming networks and, from the state’s point of view, undesirable activities. It often involved institutional measures, such as the termination of studies, or planned disruption of social relations within the network.

An apt example of prophylactic intervention can be the system of police actions deployed against an organiser and a student of Tomin’s seminar, whom the police considered particularly dangerous. The reason was that this particular individual combined several traits that were highly problematic in the officers’ eyes: he was a university student and hence had access to other actors of similar age without previous connection to the non-conformist network whom he could recruit, he was well-embedded in the counter-cultural musical underground and was thus a potential link between various groups, and he owned a flat that served as a hub for non-conformist activities. After concluding the initial investigation regarding this person and others

who attended Tomin's seminars, the police decided to send a letter to the Rector of the Czech Technical University, informing him that:

in the course of the investigation, we fully confirmed that this was an organised group which, from an anti-socialist position, influenced university students. During the investigation, we discovered that since November 1978, a student of (...) the CTU (...) organised in his flat meetings and seminars that, from a bourgeois position, denounced socialist ideology, and the Marxist scientific worldview (...). We think it is (...) necessary to notify you that these are students whose moral-political profile is in absolute contradiction with the standards required from a socialist student. Noting that we have exhausted all preventive-educational measures, we think it is necessary to reconsider the future university studies of the main figures, as especially with regard to [the Student] there is no reason to think that he would use his knowledge and future social position for the benefit of the socialist society (KR-718720 MV).

The letter, as expected, prompted the university authorities to expel the students. Interestingly, two years later, the student secured significant support from a local Party cell and was able to re-enrol at the university, 'despite the disapproval of the Faculty's authorities' (KR-718720 MV). The dissatisfaction was even greater on the side of the police, which had by then began to develop a plan to recruit the student as an agent in exchange for his continued studies.

In another case, the police decided to punish an organiser by having him evicted from his flat. This was, however, problematic, since the police themselves did not wield sufficient bureaucratic authority and had to request eviction from the landlord, the Evangelical Parish:

To prevent any further activity of [the Philosopher] regarding the organisation of the seminars, there was an action of the 2b Prague branch, which oversees the Evangelical Parish, the owner of the flat (...), meaning that the flat lease of [the Philosopher] will be cancelled. (KR-718720 MV)

What surprised the officers was that the Evangelical Parish declined their request and instead sent them a letter with information that instead of immediate eviction, they came to an agreement with the tenant, who promised to desist from organising seminars in the flat. Although this attests to possibly limited power of the police, it also means that they were able, through indirect intervention, signal to social actors that they do possess information about their whereabouts and activities and are willing to take steps to prevent them from organising non-conformist events. In other words, although the

police failed to evict the philosopher, he was still summoned by the owner of the flat and threatened with the possibility of losing his residence.

Besides such crude interferences, the police were also more creative and devised sophisticated plots to discredit actors and disrupt their intellectual credibility. One strategy devised by the police in 1979 to put a particularly active philosopher to disrepute, reads:

Considering the pursuits of [the Philosopher], I suggest that the lectures in his flat should be visited by 2 politically reliable, English-speaking students of the Philosophical Faculty with good knowledge of the history of Greek philosophy and 1 young operative officer who shall become familiar with this topic as well.

During the discussion of the topic, these students will step forth and highlight [his] insufficient preparation, arguing that the lecture is, with respect to the current knowledge of the students, tortuous and superficially researched. They will mock also the contributions of other members of the group. They will denounce [his] seminar as a fraud and a waste of time (KR-705731 MV).

In other words, even seminar discussions were not safe from indirect police interference, and could potentially become places of anxiety and mistrust, especially in the case of larger and less intimate groups. The interference of the police created a social world in which trust was difficult to establish, and in which one was never truly sure of the true motivations of others, which actors otherwise seldom doubt or muse too much about. Was one being invited to a meeting to discuss philosophy or to meet the police instead of like-minded intellectuals? Was the question asked at a seminar an honest philosophical inquiry or was the student a paid police agent recruited to disrupt the meeting?

The police also sought to disrupt personal relationships between the philosophers and hinder their future collaboration by facilitating mutual mistrust. The following example documents very well a relatively complicated ploy that the police developed to break up a professional relationship between two unofficial philosophers:

The query with [the Object] was intentionally led in a way that suggested [to them] that all information regarding [them], the “Masaryk edited volume”, and the activity of other members of the so-called parallel philosophy were handed to the police by [the Philosopher]. In this context, in an appropriate moment, [the Object] was shown a manuscript of [the Philosopher’s] study *Myslitel periodicky* [A Periodical Thinker] /acquired from [the Philosopher], in which [the Object] did handwritten edits and notes regarding content. [The Object] was also informed that

[the Philosopher] accused him of publishing his study (...) without approval. (...) To enhance the credibility of these claims the officers (...) ensured that [the Object] saw [the Philosopher] in the building of the ministry.

The evaluation of the executed prophylactic-disintegrative operation makes clear that the stated objectives were fully achieved. Mutual distrust and animosity were introduced among individual members of the so-called parallel philosophy (...). (KR-718720 MV)

Months later, a police officer complacently noted that

In the year 1981, [the Philosopher] participated in the production of samizdat (...), specifically the “Masaryk volume”, edited by Charter 77 signatories (...). Through our operative combination, the goal to introduce mutual distrust among [the Object] (...) and [the Philosopher] was achieved. The result was a rejection of any further collaboration in the production of oppositional publications and subsequent mutual slandering in the enemy’s environment. (KR-718720 MV)

To summarise, the prophylactic strategies of the secret police spanned from quite simple to rather sophisticated plots in which the police played with mutual perception and reputation of individual actors. Even if the actors were not knowledgeable about the involvement of the state forces in their lives, they still experienced the consequences of these plots. These interventions facilitated uncertainty in social contact, isolated and further marginalised social actors. Such acts created the kind of world in which, as Sztompka’s writes, ‘trust is generally inadvisable’ and ‘suspension of trust, caution, and suspiciousness is the most rational policy, because naïve trust may be highly dangerous’ (Sztompka, 2000: 159).

Subornation

Besides aggressive interventions and ploys to isolate the dissidents or even pit them against each other, the police disrupted and immobilized the networks of non-conformist actors also by recruiting its members as agents or informers. I have already shown in the previous section that the police sometimes instrumentalised what can be called a ‘carrot and stick’ approach. First, for example, they achieved the termination of an individual’s studies and later, they would approach them with a quid pro quo offer: in exchange for information or service, they would be admitted to the university again. Alternatively, they were offered employment, such as in the following example, in

which the police tried to silence a particularly vocal philosopher by finding him an academic job:

[We will] thoroughly research possibilities of employing [the Philosopher] in his field, which would disrepute him and lead to his isolation from other signatories of the Charter 77 and right-wing exponents. To this end, enquire, with assistance from the party authorities, at relevant institutions about the possibility of commissioning a Plato translation, which would, under specific circumstances, take [him] several years [to complete] but which would, of course, not lead to publication (...). (KR-705731 MV)

On his own account, the philosopher declined this offer. But not everyone was able to do so. In another case, the police successfully managed to entice a young philosophy student by flattery and incentives. The officer noted in his report that:

In conclusion, it was made clear to [him] that we express such great interest in his person because we think that a person with such progressive ideas should not stand aside. Conditions should be created for his return to the Faculty, [and he should] understand our interest in his person and his environment, [and that] we need to know as much as possible to help him out. (...) At the end [of the meeting], he was asked to produce a list of philosophical literature that he draws on so that we could familiarise ourselves with his field of interest. (KR-698275 MV)

Indeed, the individual, then in his early 20s, was flattered by the interest as well as the task to educate the police on contemporary philosophy. Nonetheless, such agreement was not a way out of the anxiety experienced by non-conformists and the report shows that the young philosopher was very concerned about the discreteness of the agreement and emphatically ‘expressed his interest in the concealment of our contact,’ which the police officer ‘guaranteed’ (KR-698275 MV). This was indeed rational, as wider knowledge of his contact with the police would likely discredit the actor in the non-conformist networks. Police agents, of course, imperilled the general activities of the dissidents and put others into danger. The following example offers a glimpse to the other side, a story of an unofficial philosopher’s own arrest due to information provided to the police by his acquaintance, as well as the thought process by which he identified the culprit:

So long story short, one day they arrested us all. It was about ten hours’ worth of questioning that I went through, I think there was also a house search. (...) How did it happen? Well, [a Friend 1] wanted to talk to [a Friend 2] about publishing a [samizdat] philosophy journal. They invited me over too, (...) and [the Informer] was there as well, and he listened to what we were

talking about. Then we went home. Not long after [the meeting], we were arrested. I mean, with the exception of [the Informer] who, it turned out, was the police agent who informed them about us. I figured that out already during the questioning. The officers were so sure they [got us] that they failed to stick to the rules and they said more than they should have had. For example, they asked me about some names and these names came from three (...) communities. I was sure that [these people] didn't know each other. The only people connecting them was I and [the informer]. So, if I didn't inform the police, it must have been him. (interview 4)

Another former unofficial philosopher, also arrested in connection to the case, looks back at this specific informer with some degree of understanding:

You know, there were [people] like that... [the Informer] was a good example of [this kind of a person]. He was an ambitious existentialist, from a kind of literary background. And he was trying to solve the unsolvable. On the one side the cops, on the other the dissent. He simply could not handle it. (...) It's not true that everything was just black-and-white (...). (interview 12)

As Tikhomirov recently noted, social trust relies on 'the moral expectation that a person whom you trust will act in your best interest, and that he or she will adhere to the prevailing moral values and traditions' (Tikhomirov, 2017: 314). In the non-conformist network in socialist Czechoslovakia, this expectation was put in jeopardy by the police's effort to entice members in order to gain insight and acquire information useful for further prophylaxis. Sometimes, the police actually decided that the mere appearance of being an agent was destructive enough. As one report on an unofficial philosophy student reads, the police judged her as 'naïve', and unfit to become a collaborator, but the officer complacently noted that this feature 'creates the impression of her being an [police] informer, and busies the members of the [Czechoslovak] opposition with screening her' (KR-696375 MV). The idea behind this report was that this enthusiastic and perhaps callow student was suspected to be an agent by several important actors of the network who, according to the police, engaged in the pointless screening of this individual. As the police hoped, this misdirected precautionary activity was an opportunity to catch the non-conformists red-handed through real agents and informers who were temporarily above their suspicion.

The network of non-conformist actors was, therefore, destabilised not only by outright hostile actions of the secret police. The strategies of subornation were similarly endangering because they imperilled interpersonal trust and confidentiality among

actors and, as Horne argued in a recent study on transitional justice in post-socialist countries, ‘could increase uncertainty about the future and therefore undermine social trust’ (Horne, 2017: 43). In effect, they both forced actors out from the network and co-created the environment in which the constitution of social ties was problematized by pervasive distrust.

Resisting the Police

The actors of the non-conformist network were usually acutely aware of the possibility that they were wiretapped or followed. To avoid police interference, they invented strategies such as regularly changing the time of the seminars as well as their location. Among other rules, they desisted from relating confidential information over the telephone or keeping silent during questionings. As one of the former students remembered, ‘it was our culture and our customary law that we would not say anything, because whatever you said could be used against you. You didn’t talk to the police and refused to tell them anything’ (interview 2).

One example of an anti-surveillance strategy is revealed in a request sent to the Jan Hus Educational Foundation, in which the philosophers ask for ‘a good wad of those magic writing pads with instant erasure that children use’ (Robert Grant, JHEF Report, 1984) to write messages that could be quickly and effortlessly deleted and unlikely to be used by the police. As the following segment from a 1986 secret police document makes clear, however, the magic writing pads were not the only anti-surveillance technology which the non-conformists possessed:

Before the meeting of signatories of the CH-77 started, a man (...) explored the room with some kind of gadget, which they referred to as ‘a beeper’, and with which he checked for the presence of listening devices. After concluding this action, he pronounced that the room was probably clear (...). (KR-749386 MV)

Apparently, the dissidents had also relatively sophisticated gadgets that allowed them to uncover surveillance devices – although this clearly did not help very much. Also, the possession of such technology seems to have been itself risky. As Robert Grant noted in his report to the JHEF, his suggestion to acquire a similar device, made to a different

group, was not welcome, with the philosophers arguing that ‘if discovered, any such hardware could land them in the soup’ (Robert Grant, JHEF Report, 1984).

In other words, the disruptive strategies of police interference provoked reactions among the dissidents, such as the development of strategies that sought to confuse the police or conceal the activity. Among these reactions were, for example, the establishment of codes of behaviour that guided individual conduct as well as the contact with the secret police. Nonetheless, neither precautions nor internal coming to terms with the danger could eliminate the uncertainty about participation in the network, as one of the philosophers recalled:

when I went to Hejdánek’s, I internally prepared for everything. (...). That was another thing, when you heard that stuff like that happened, it prompted you to contemplate what you would do yourself [in such situation]. For example, if somebody used violence, smacked me or held me somewhere. (...) I would not say it was some strong, pervasive fear... but it was anxiety.
(interview 6)

Another former member of the non-conformist network remembers that, when visiting Tomin’s seminar already as a high school student, he established a secret code with his co-students when talking on the phone: ‘We had a secret code. For example, when somebody called me and said: hey, don’t forget to take the badminton racquets, that meant we were doing Plato that night’ (interview 8).

Here, I would like to note that although these acts of resistance were sometimes individualised, they usually concerned some meaningful activity or project that non-conformists wished to conceal from the police – to avoid trouble as well as to protect the project from being destroyed. The emphasis on secrecy also aimed to keep other individuals involved safe. Unofficial seminars were this type of project, which turned an audience under pressure into a collaborative community pursuing what they saw as an intellectually and historically legitimate goal. But to become such, the meanings that the audiences would engage with had to be performatively enacted by the actors who convened these seminars.

Conclusion: A Network Destabilised

In this chapter, I explored and described various strategies deployed by the Czechoslovak state forces, especially its secret police, to destabilise and decompose the network of non-conformists. I argued that extensive interventions, surveillance, bribery, and plots devised by the police led eventually to the destabilisation of the non-conformist framework. When Bauman wrote in his essay on Central East European intellectuals that it is the lack of ‘freedom of creation’ that is ‘experienced and articulated by the intellectuals as “lack of freedom” as such’ (Bauman, 1987: 178), he failed to recognise the full gamut of limitations that non-conformists in socialist countries were subject to, as well as their consequences. While common citizens in socialist countries suffered ‘only’ from ‘deep decay of trust in the public sphere (...) with a complete shift of trust to the private domain’ (Sztompka, 2000: 156), the non-conformists were endangered also on this level of private relations.

This fact of destabilisation was necessary to establish because intellectual performances are crucially shaped by the structure of social relations and parameters such as trust and the level of anxiety. While these do not determine the content of performances, they indeed influence the choice of symbols as well as the perceptiveness of the audience. In situations when groups are under tangible threat, or when they believe they are, particular meanings may surface which otherwise would not. These meanings may be of the kind that otherwise would be dismissed as ridiculous overreactions. When they are coupled with an imagined or real threat, their effectiveness and persuasiveness increases.

In the following chapters, I discuss how unofficial philosophers articulated the idea that their very discipline was in danger and that this danger was due to its ability to speak truth to the state. These performances could emerge and be persuasive to a large degree because many individuals in their audiences had a first- or second-hand experience with the state forces. In some cases, the police intervened during the unofficial seminars and terminated the performances directly. Of course, in reality, police officers could not care less about philosophy. They were concerned with non-conformists growing international contacts, dissemination of the Charter 77, and recruiting young people into the civil rights movement. Nonetheless, these motivations were largely hidden from

unofficial philosophers and their students. To them, the fact that police went to such pains to disintegrate their network made it all the more believable that the philosophers, their discipline, and the truth of philosophical inquiry were under threat.

CHAPTER 5: The Sages and the Taskmasters: Charismatic Performances of Czechoslovak Unofficial Philosophers

In the previous chapter, I explored the various strategies by which the state undermined the trust of Prague's non-conformist network. I argued that the network was fundamentally destabilized and that the actors who participated in it had to be always mindful of the possible repercussions that their involvement might have on their future careers and lives in general. In this chapter, I explore how intellectuals who convened unofficial philosophy seminars enticed their students. I argue that it was their ability to enact the 'scripts of the trade' which made the most successful of them stand out among others and performatively construct their charismatic personas in their classrooms and flats. This is important for the sociology of intellectuals because it offers a more detailed perspective on success in mid-level intellectual performances, the way in which they unite audiences in their interest – but also divide them.

The interviewees who studied in both official and unofficial seminars all converge on one point – they perceived their unofficial teachers as dramatically different from those who taught them at official universities. As one recalled, the university teachers 'were usually mediocre, and most of them lacked any appeal' (interview 4). Another agreed: '[the university] did not generate any joy of learning for me, right, and I was searching for some way out of that' (interview 2). Similar feelings of boredom, alienation, and lack of intellectual excitement were expressed in a protest letter, sent to the Ministry of Education by a student who was expelled from his university course for attending an unofficial seminar:

One characteristic of our studies (...) is alienation. Its sources are to be found in the process of education itself [and] the lack of efficient organisation that would be able to put forth the interests of the students. (...) Truly creative work is substituted with formalism. (...) It is necessary to understand who is serves whom at the university. It is unacceptable to continue looking at the students as just a mass of people, it is necessary to see them as individuals and understand their different abilities. I believe that the problem of stimulation will have to be addressed by restructuring the organisation and the content of education as such, so that students will not be forced to study, but that studying will become a necessity for them. (...) Students must be shown the endless space of the ocean of knowledge (...) (KR-698842 MV).

I seek to capture this quality that distinguishes intellectuals in the eyes of their audiences by the concept of performatively enacted charisma. The gist of my argument is simple – some intellectuals are better performers than others. They are better able to enact the scripts of their trade, they manipulate meanings more creatively, and they concoct better narratives. They command the respect of their audiences, whose members may enhance their reputation by spreading the word of their excellence beyond the immediate context of their performances. Segments of their audiences may become tightly woven groups of disciples who follow intellectuals through institutions, creating and improving the conditions for future displays of their talents.

Weber originally construed charisma as a token that legitimises authority and leadership. It was the feature that others perceived as a ‘gift of grace’ (Weber, 1968: 47), a sign that one is chosen by fate or transcendental power to be in charge of others. Most usually, charismatic authority was a form of leadership that aimed to shatter existing order and was coupled with a relatively egalitarian social structure of followers who were led by the charismatic leader. It was something Weber spotted in prophets and warlords (and Kurt Eisner). Authors writing after Weber, however, noted that charisma is not merely a destructive feature but also has the capacity to maintain social institutions (Shils, 1965). Subsequently, charisma has been widely used to explore the dynamics of religious movements (Feldman, 2012; Junker, 2014; Wignall, 2016) or politics and leadership (Gerth, 1940; House et al., 1990; Joosse, 2018; Mio et al., 2005).

Seeking to unpack the ‘partly abstract, partly mystical and irrational pseudo-concept of “charisma”’ (Lukács, 1980: 629), researchers have taken two principal paths (Joosse, 2018). One explored the interactional dimension of charisma, especially between the leader and followers as well as among the followers (Finlay, 2002; Joosse, 2017). The other emphasised the performative dimension of charisma as a meaning-making process deployed by skilled actors who entice groups and crowds and inspire them to follow their lead towards some form of utopian future (Couch, 1989; Joosse, 2006b; Reed, 2013). Here, quirks and pauses, the rhetorical competence (Heracleous and Klaering, 2014) and generally the ability to dramatically enact meanings in front of audiences, is what creates the charismatic effect. As Reed demonstrated, the performance approach uncovers that charisma does not exist only in *statu nascendi* (Weber, 2013) but appears in a string of performances. These performances are connected in a ‘spiral of success’,

in which the individual acts ‘spiral toward ever-greater heights of emotion’ (Reed, 2013: 267).

One of the outcomes of this research vein is the importance of various roles and scripts that emerge in the charismatic interaction, and which contribute to the success – or failure – of performances. As Lloyd recently argued, for example, charismatic black American leaders such as Barack Obama rise by performing specific roles effective to their initial audiences. These roles, however, sometimes do not resonate so well on the national level, where the audience is much larger and comprises various groups with different expectations (Lloyd, 2018: 14). In other words, some roles resonate with particular audiences but others do not. Charismatic figures, however, not only enact existing roles – they themselves often engage in categorizations and assign roles to others. As Joosse notes in his analysis of Donald Trump’s performances, politicians’ ‘charisma periodically spills over and troubles the wider social order’ with them making reference to the ‘counter-roles’ of their ‘unworthy challengers’ and a ‘colossal power’ that they seek to combat (Joosse, 2018: 938). Clearly, the sense of endangerment can be conducive to individual charisma and may indeed elevate the leader in the eyes of his or her followers, who believe that he or she fights in a just struggle against formidable forces (or colossal power). In this sense, a tense social situation in which there truly is a degree of danger can heighten charismatic effect of a leader by providing conditions in which their contrarianism can be well demonstrated.

Seldom, however, did researchers explore whether charisma plays a role among intellectuals. A notable exception is William Clark (2007) who explored the origins of the research university, concluding that the figure of a charismatic educator arose, paradoxically, through bureaucratizing pressure of state administration. According to Clark, it emerged together with the seminar form of teaching, which enabled excellent intellectuals to radiate their appeal and create a cult-like following. Nonetheless, Clark does not focus on how such charismatic teachers appeared to their followers in real-life, except for their asceticism. Closer attention to how intellectuals present themselves, and what makes them appealing to their students and audiences, is necessary.

This closer attention should be directed to processes beyond intellectual textual production, to their everyday routinised performances. As Bourdieu writes in *The*

Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger, ‘the great philosophical options (...) are embodied in the palpable forms of people, who are themselves perceived in terms of their lifestyle, behaviour, and speech’ (Bourdieu, 1991: 51–52). Hence, it is not only ideas and texts what constitutes their appeal – although writing is indeed performance (Stevenson, 2019). Intellectual histories are histories of walking, talking, rehearsing and performing people who often had to stand face to face with their audiences and persuade them that indeed they are right and worth listening to. This is true from academic intellectuals of local notoriety to the most famous celebrities. Consider, for example, how Slavoj Žižek and Jordan Peterson, perhaps the best examples of intellectual stars at the moment, differ in their public presentation and demeanour, and how that appeals to (or divides) their audiences. They both enact the ‘role of intellectual’, described by Eyerman as the figure who communicates ideas to wide audiences (Eyerman, 2011) and play the ‘wise men’ who warn us all about a looming civilizational catastrophe. The ways in which they do this, however, could not be more different. Taking the charismatic performance and role enactment processes seriously permits a deeper understanding of the fame and influence intellectuals like them enjoy.

In this chapter, I combine the two approaches to charisma mentioned above and describe two basic scripts through which unofficial philosophers appeared charismatic – in other words as figures whom their students considered sufficiently interesting as intellectuals, as offering something they felt they lacked, to overcome the anxiety of risk associated with pursuing philosophy in the non-conformist network. The two scripts enacted by unofficial philosophy performers are that of the *sage* and the *taskmaster*. Superficially similar to the Jung’s ‘old wise man’⁹ archetype (Jung, 1968), the sage is a fatherly figure who appears as having access to forms of knowledge that are normally inaccessible to others. In the case of unofficial philosophers, this was often the knowledge of demonstratively civilizational or societal import, combined with the capacity for moral diagnosis of the current condition in Czechoslovakia or the world in general (in this respect similar to Bartmanski’s intellectual icons, Bartmanski 2012). Often, there is a penchant for utopian (or dystopian) visions of the future. The

⁹ Man, since there were very few women in the unofficial philosophy scene, and none of them was, unfortunately, an individual convener of an unofficial seminar. In other contexts we can likely find sages of any sex and gender, although, as argued for example by Battersby, this imbalance is a deeply entrenched and long-lasting problem in intellectual and art canons (Battersby, 1990).

taskmaster, on the other hand, is a disciplinary and disciplinarian figure oriented to the intellectual field they inhabit, emphasising rigorous, professionalised engagement, and concerned with the competence and intellectual excellence of their students.

In the following sections, I present four thinkers who enacted these two roles to various degrees. To provide the reader with a better grasp of their personalities and dispositions, I write in a quasi-biographic manner, offering always a brief overview of the intellectual's path to becoming an unofficial convener, and then recollections of their students. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of divisive performances of different roles, to show that performances in unofficial philosophy were not only cohesive and those who performed not only generally admired but they occasionally antagonised parts of their audiences.

The Sages of Philosophy: Charisma of Intellectual Virtuosity and Deep Knowledge

In this section, I discuss how the ability of unofficial philosophers to enact deep knowledge through the display of understanding of text and reality was perceived as charismatic, and how they achieved their sage-like appearance through the discussion of moral symbols. As recently argued by Fine and Wohl, for example, the ability to perform as a social scientist is 'built upon the presentation of ideas of others – recognized and sanctioned others – through talk that should demonstrate that the student has the ability to shape and critique ideas' (Fine and Wohl, 2018: 559). Unofficial seminars were not different and education and taste mattered. What demonstrated them was the ability to explore texts and conjure up previously inaccessible, sometimes surprising meanings, often ones that appeared to have civilizational or moral import.

Before addressing actors who spent their intellectual lives mostly in the sphere of unofficial academic pursuits, it is necessary to start with a person who had enticed several of them during their university studies, and who later became the doyen of unofficial philosophy of the 1970s. This person was Jan Patočka (1907-1977), a philosopher who left a lasting mark on several generations of Czech thinkers (Tucker, 2001), and was, especially after his death while serving as the Charter 77 spokesperson,

coded among unofficial philosophers as the paradigmatic charismatic figure who embodied the principles of philosophy both as academic discipline and the way of life. Patočka's influence is perhaps paradoxical given the frequent interruptions in his official teaching career, which lasted approximately twelve years in total, and never longer than six consecutive semesters (1932, 1936-39, 1945-49, 1968-1972). First, Patočka taught philosophy as a newly-minted PhD in 1932 and then, after a series of scholarships in Berlin and Freiburg, as an associate professor between 1936 and 1939, when the Nazis closed Czech Universities for the duration of WWII. In 1945, Patočka returned to Charles University, but his teaching was cut short by the Communist coup in 1948 when, as a non-Marxist philosopher, he was no longer allowed to teach. During the 1950s and 60s, he was employed in research and librarian positions at the Masaryk Archive and the Academy of Czechoslovak Sciences. Patočka returned to teaching in the reform year 1968 when he was offered a chair at Charles University. Three years later, he was forced to leave again, when a new law mandated compulsory retirement of academic employees at 65 (Petráň, 2015: 438). After his retirement, Patočka was approached by his former students about their interest in continuing their studies under his tutelage, and he began teaching unofficially and continued his philosophical work until his death in 1977.

Patočka's students whom I interviewed agreed on one particular feature of his pedagogic craft: the ability to present himself as more than merely a lecturer in the history of philosophy but rather as a spontaneous, creative agent producing original philosophical insight. They perceived this as extraordinary virtuosity. As one of his students, who first attended Patočka's lecture in a library prior to the philosopher's return to official academia, remembered:

Around the time of my high school graduation, I discovered that there were public lectures on philosophy in the Prague Municipal Library. I started to attend them, and there I got to know, in one of his lectures, Professor Patočka. He completely stood out among all the other lecturers because they all just talked about philosophy, but he demonstrated philosophy right on the spot. (interview 4)

What the student means by demonstrating philosophy 'on the spot' is Patočka's ability to improvise lectures rather than read them out loud, and his creative ambition in lecturing on his subject. This appearance of spontaneity is not uncommon among

successful intellectual performers. Incidentally, the ability to ‘extemporize large portions of his lectures rather than stick to a prepared manuscript’ (Derman, 2013: 16) was something that fascinated students also in the lectures of the first sociological analyst of charisma, Max Weber. Another classic 20th-century intellectual, George Herbert Mead, was no different, and his students remembered that he ‘simply sat behind his desk, and while his hands toyed with a piece of chalk, his mind unfolded fresh and profound interpretations of philosophy and life’ (Huebner, 2014: 85). Indeed, this is the performance par excellence of the sage’s charisma. In the eyes of the audience, spontaneity gives the impression that what the actor presents comes to them naturally, as a result of their talent and deep connectedness to the intellectual tradition of the discipline. Published recollections of his earlier students, however, suggest that Patočka’s performances were likely composed with careful effort. Years before my interviewees knew him, Patočka was in the habit of excusing himself from lectures and seminars for feeling insufficiently prepared (Blecha, 1997). Nonetheless, for the student above, Patočka’s charismatic appeal was such that he

went to Patočka immediately after the lecture and asked him whether he would grant me permission to attend his seminars [at the university]. He thoroughly questioned me, asked me if I had read something and what that was, and when he saw that my interest was genuine, he invited me. And, since then, I went to all his lectures and seminars. (interview 4)

Here, the sense of personal magnetism created through performance elicited interest from a member of the audience and prompted him to initiate a direct social relationship with the charismatic actor. During the initial contact, the performer fuelled his appeal by establishing a barrier to this emergent relation – a ‘thorough questioning’ of the teenage candidate, which indicated that the proximity to the actor was not a matter-of-course. It was a spot reserved only to the select few who met his standards.

Another of Patočka’s students, who attended his university lectures as a mature graduate of a technical programme, describes Patočka’s spontaneous intellectual performances in a very similar way:

It was an introductory course to phenomenology (...). Immediately, it was clear to us that his lectures were something extraordinary. (...) He made them up on the spot. He had nothing written upfront, he just came with a small piece of paper, put it down on the table, and didn’t

look at it for the full two hours. He spoke very slowly because he was making it up right there. He knew what he wanted to say, but he improvised the formulations. (interview 3)

As in the previous case, Patočka's appeal propelled the student to action. Persuaded by the philosopher's performances, the student began to believe in the intellectual exclusivity and utmost importance of his lectures. Fearing that they might be forever lost due to Patočka's lack of documentation, the interviewed student, together with other peers, launched a recording and archiving project of Patočka's works¹⁰:

First, we figured that somebody would just write what they remembered and for as long as they remembered, and then somebody else would continue, and after every lecture, we went to somebody's place and put it together into a complete text. I later (...) managed to smuggle in some small tape recorders. In those days, it was quite unacceptable to just come in [to a lecture] and take out a recorder, so we kept them in a satchel, and when the half-hour of the tape was due, we switched on another one. Then somebody would transcribe it and we would meet again to compare [the recording] with our notes. (interview 3)

Similarly to the previous student, this interviewee was so enticed by Patočka's performances that he decided to become more than merely a member of his regular audience, but a doctoral candidate (despite having been already a technical program graduate in full-time employment):

I went to Patočka and he said: well, dear colleague, but do you speak German? I answered that yes, I had some German at the grammar school. He told me to read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in German and come again. That took me half a year. When I returned, he just said: I didn't mean that seriously, you should have come earlier. Thus, I became his PhD student. (interview 3)

Both these students emphasise one further aspect of Patočka's performances that confirmed his intellectual prowess – the structure of the audience. Although he taught undergraduate courses, both students noted that they were attended not only by undergraduates but 'all the assistant and associate professors' (interview 3). To the students, this signalled that Patočka had a singular ability to access forms of knowledge that seemed to have been inaccessible even to advanced professionals. In their eyes, it had an equalising effect, a reversal of academic structure to a form of intellectual

¹⁰ This project exists until today in the form of Jan Patočka Archive and has since 1989 employed, in one way or another, many former unofficial philosophers.

communism in the face of what was perceived as a true intellectual gift. It suddenly erased the standard hierarchies within the audience:

The first seminar I attended (...) was a commented reading of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*. I was desperate. I understood nothing. I started to think that I should probably leave. But slowly, I noticed that the people sitting next to me, proper students of the Philosophical Faculty, seemed to be in the same situation. In the first rows, there were the assistant and associate professors. They seemed to be the most confused among us all. (interview 4)

As these excerpts demonstrate, charismatic performance is a complex social situation. Its felicity, as well as the magnitude of this felicity, is contingent on a multiplicity of factors that determine the eventual fusion of performance elements. One of them concerns the structure of the audience itself. Seeing the actor command respect from others, especially those who themselves enjoy good reputation and/or institutional position, may facilitate the charismatic appeal of the performance. It confirms – or disrupts – others' interpretation of the performer's capacity and skill.

The appeal of Patočka's lectures was such that his students continued to attend them despite growing marginalisation from university authorities who, after the 1968 invasion and with the coming purges in academia, sought to curtail his access to the means of symbolic production and limit his audience. As his student recalled, 'they knew that his lectures were always full, so they moved him to a small office. But we went anyway, although we had to stand in that small stuffy room through the whole seminar or lecture' (interview 4). Rather than put his core fans off, this only added to his appeal. Not only was he a philosopher with an extraordinary gift, but his philosophy had something that seemed troubling to the university elites, stained by collaboration with the counter-revolutionary post-1968 regime.

Most importantly, Patočka's students and colleagues followed him outside of official academia after he retired in 1972. The group which originally formed during his lectures and arranged the recording project subsequently approached the retired professor with a request for further meetings. As one of them recalled, here Patočka also showed a less sagely and a more systematic persona:

Patočka's last lecture was on 1st June 1972, exactly on his 65th birthday. And he was gone. Soon, however, we began to feel sorry that there were no more of his lectures. I visited him sometimes at his home, and I thought it was a pity that I simply couldn't remember everything he told me,

so I asked him if he would mind more of us visiting him. When he saw that we were such as group, he said we had to do something more systematic. We agreed on Heidegger's *Being and Time*. (interview 3)

As the student recalls, Patočka's retirement was also the end of his own interest in pursuing official education in philosophy. It seems that it was Patočka who imbued this student's intellectual pursuits with meaning. When it became clear that he would not be allowed to write his doctoral thesis on phenomenology, the student decided to drop out of his PhD programme altogether:

They transferred me to another supervisor and I passed some examinations, but as the normalisation continued, I began wondering whether the PhD actually had any meaning. Eventually, I decided I would not write some nonsense thesis about God-knows-what. I told them I had a sick daughter and asthma, that second bit was true, and I dropped out. Officially in 1975, but I stopped going there years before that. All that time, however, I was attending Patočka's private seminars. (interview 3)

Patočka later expanded the seminar, which originally focused on Heidegger, a philosopher under whom he studied at Freiburg, with a close reading of Husserl's *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936), a work by another scholar who supervised him in Germany¹¹. Patočka's relation to this philosophy classic was all the more personal, as Husserl based it on his 1935 Prague lectures, to which he was invited by the Prague Philosophy Circle, a group Patočka co-founded a year earlier. Here, it can be speculated that Patočka's charismatic appeal may have been further elevated by his direct relation to both authors, who were already lynchpins of continental philosophy. Not only was Patočka radiating his own charisma, but he also mediated the appeal of two iconic intellectuals of 20th century. This was his charismatic connection to the sanctified disciplinary lineage.

¹¹ Husserl, although retired from 1928, was Patočka's de facto supervisor in Freiburg together with his younger apostle Eugen Fink, whom Husserl appointed to provide young Patočka with an intense introduction into phenomenology. After his return to Czechoslovakia, Patočka made his mark as a propagator of phenomenology and wrote his first significant work *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*. His relation to Husserl was such that after the elderly Jewish philosopher died and his bequest was threatened to be destroyed by the Nazis, together with other phenomenologist philosophers, Patočka supported publishing of Husserl's books in Prague, and later helped to transfer Husserl's manuscripts to Leuven. In an ironical twist, Husserl's first Prague-published book *Experience and Judgment* came out shortly before the German invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939, and the whole stock of the book was destroyed except for several copies. The post-war edition of the book was reprinted from Patočka's personal copy, one of the few that survived the German invasion.

Despite this relation to Husserl and Heidegger, Patočka was not a panegyrist. Rather, he engaged in a critical re-examination of their approach. He seemed to have used the seminars as a way to carve his own authentic approach between Husserl and Heidegger and prepare his material for later publication. This is clearly a feature of what his students phrased as ‘doing philosophy on the spot’. With Patočka, they were not merely reading and interpreting but seeking to generate new ideas and criticism of two central figures of the 20th-century European philosophy. As one of the students remembered, they

began by reading Heidegger, because he clearly needed to refresh his memory. Although he lectured on the conflict between Heidegger and Husserl before, he still struggled with it himself. All his life, [Patočka], as Husserl’s student, criticized Husserl from a sort of a very correct position, and that position was somehow Heideggerian, but he didn’t like Heidegger that much either, so [in the seminars] he sought to understand how to link these two. (...) He was writing the *Heretical Essays*¹² already. There, he came to terms with this conflict. So he had to read Heidegger again [for that]. (interview 3)

Patočka included his seminar students in the process of his own thinking and the emergence of his own original works, particularly the *Heretical Essays*, which became iconic works of Czechoslovak dissent and the non-conformist network. In these seminars, he was delivering intellectual performances that were both fresh and building up to an impactful work. He was, in the eyes of the followers, enacting the gist of the philosophical trade, the powerful and creative, yet disciplined and erudite source of ideas they felt they would never match. However, they felt that he recognised their talents and made them his intellectual confidantes – an inner circle.

This example shows how a personality capable of enacting charismatic performances may draw people outside of the state-sanctioned institutionalised framework such as universities. Patočka’s impressive demonstrations of intellectual virtuosity and prowess motivated his colleagues and students to participate, and in fact elicit more of his performances. As Couch argues (1989), this is common in the development of social relations fuelled by charismatic appeal. In the emerging atmosphere of normalisation, with the elderly philosopher being marginalised again, the students created a circle of admirers. A part of this group later became his charismatic aristocracy, radiating

¹² Later published as *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (Patočka, [1977] 1999).

Patočka's own charisma through their own unofficial seminars and writings long after his death.

During the 1970s, Patočka became more involved with the emerging dissident network, and so did his students. This was particularly thanks to his other connections, such as Jiří Němec or Ladislav Hejdlánek, later key figures of the Charter 77 and unofficial pedagogues. By the mid-1970s, Patočka was lecturing to a wider and predominantly non-conformist audience. This widening of his appeal was made possible by the members of the original group, who formed the core of his charismatic aristocracy, especially Ivan Chvatík, Jiri Polívka, Miroslav Petříček and Marika Křištofová, who organised his lectures, seeking to mobilise the audience as well as the means of symbolic production in the increasingly destabilised social world. As a member of the original group remembered,

It became clear that he had something to say to a much wider audience. However, there was not enough space in his own flat, which was enough for a maximum of seven or ten people. So, we started to organise seminars in those huge old flats in central Prague. Every lecture had to be in a different flat, and we organised it not by telephone, but just by the word-of-mouth. They were attended usually by around 30-40 people, we recorded [the lecture] and Marika Křištofová or Mirek Petříček, also a great typist, wrote them down too. I then put the text and the recording together. (interview 3)

Clearly, the production of Patočka's performances became increasingly professionalised as Patočka's charismatic aristocracy grew consolidated and more interested in extending his perceived charisma beyond their immediate circle. They re-invented themselves as 'Patočka entrepreneurs', managing the fusion of performance elements by securing the means of symbolic production (and post-production) as well as the audience – but they still remained under the spell of his charisma. The actor, Patočka himself, then took care of the scripts and mise-en-scène, polished by decades of his official and unofficial pedagogic practice. However, this transformation of the nature of performance elements in Patočka's unofficial lectures may possibly have had a slightly antagonising effect on participants, since it disturbed the natural and spontaneous appearance of his performances. As one of Patočka's students, who attended his lectures in the 1960s as well as the 1970s, recalled:

I must admit that when I went to this lecture and saw all the reeling recorders and those scribes, there was a whole group of them, there was this Marika girl I remember, and it was clear that they were not writing notes but writing down every word... it was annoying. (interview 12)

At the same time, the necessity to change flats and avoid telephonic communication documents how paranoia of police intervention was increasing throughout the 1970s. Although, as admitted by my interviewees, the police never actually came, the organisers and the audience were worried about possible interference. Patočka, a notoriously careful character who avoided engagement and any explicitly political activity for all his life, was probably the most worried of them. According to his student,

The continuation of this cycle which we called *The Care for The Soul*, and which Petr Rezek later entitled *Plato and Europe*, were the *Heretical Essays* organised by Jaroslav Krejčí, the photographer, in his atelier on Kampa. Although it was always at the same place and at the same time, the police never came. But who came once was this guy, he had died recently. It was known that he worked for the police. I mean, I didn't know that, but Patočka did. When he appeared there, [Patočka] just went silent, looked at him and said, 'Get out!' He kicked him out. [Patočka] wouldn't start speaking until that man had left. (interview 3)

It is important to note here that the possible presence of police agents or other actors and conditions that are seen as adversaries is not necessarily detrimental to intellectual charisma. To the contrary, the feeling that the powers that the charismatic performer challenges (or purports to challenge) are directly present and threatening may help him or her to make the case and indeed present the performance as being of acute importance to the 'unworthy challengers' and 'colossal powers' (Joosse, 2018: 938).

At the same time, Patočka's charisma was fuelled also by the symbolic content he communicated in his performances. As his audience grew and spread beyond philosophy professionals and students to a more general non-conformist network, he moved away from the specialist close reading of Heidegger to a more lecture-like style. His topics increasingly addressed the current situation of humanity in the 20th century as well as that of marginalised dissidents. To capture the moral distinction between the unofficial and the official intellectuals, he devised a distinction between 'intellectuals' and 'spiritual men' – while the spiritual man is the Socratic searcher, the intellectual is a professional without genuine willingness to penetrate the true core of reality (Patočka,

1990). He connected philosophy with morality and presented philosophy as a mode of thinking that, although often deemed withdrawn and elitist, can redeem an individual as well as the community and become an active force of resistance. In the opening lecture to the cycle *Plato and Europe* (1973), which explored the central role of Plato's thought in Western civilisation, Patočka said:

Today people often get together to talk about abstract and eventually lofty things to escape for a moment the distress in which we all find ourselves, so that they may lift both their spirits and their minds. While I think that this is all well, it is more like entertainment for old ladies. Philosophical reflection ought to have a different purpose, it should somehow help us in the distress in which we are; precisely in the situation in which we are placed, philosophy is to be a matter of inner conduct. (Patočka, 2002: 1)¹³

Clearly, the actor was enhancing the success of his performance by framing its content as having moral and societal importance. Rather than mere entertainment, philosophy – including the lecture in question – was in Patočka's understanding more than a form of talk, supposed to distract people from the 'distress' of living in normalised Czechoslovakia. In his interpretation, philosophy acquired great importance and became the power that engenders understanding, a certain reflection of the situation, which, although it may not improve the situation itself, is 'at least on the way to clarification' (Patočka, 2002: 1). To his audiences, Patočka framed his performances as cultural texts with the capacity to change their lives, and perhaps the life of the entire Czechoslovak society. Importantly, he himself became seen as the embodiment of this subtle transformative power. Not surprisingly, this framing elevated him to the position of a charismatic sage.

Jan Patočka, however, was not the only unofficial philosopher who mastered the ability to enact charismatic performances through a spectacular display of knowledge. Another example of an actor who skilfully performed a profound understanding of complex problems in the semi-academic setting of the unofficial seminars was one of Patočka's former students, Daniel Kroupa (1949). Kroupa's example demonstrates again the charisma of intellectual virtuosity and deep knowledge, as well as the transfer of charisma through intellectual lineage. Kroupa studied under Patočka as an

¹³ I use the existing English translation of the lectures by Petr Lom, published by Stanford University Press in 2002.

undergraduate at Charles University but dropped out of his studies in the early 1970s and worked mostly in manual jobs. During this decade, he participated in various discussion groups and, together with other central figures of the unofficial philosophy network, such as Ladislav Hejdánek or Martin Palouš, worked on translations of classical Greek philosophy, in particular, Aristotle's *Metaphysics Zeta*. He signed the Charter 77 and was well-embedded in the community of Catholic dissidents, as well as the world of unofficial art. In 1978, Kroupa decided to set up a philosophy seminar for younger students, one that would serve as an introduction to philosophy. His ulterior motive, however, was to prepare the students for reading the works of his own charismatic teacher, Patočka, who passed away in 1977. As Kroupa wrote to the Jan Hus Educational Foundation in 1988:

I began with a one-year cycle on the history of philosophy and then focused on the close reading of the works of E. Husserl and M. Heidegger /as a necessary erudition for independent study of J. Patočka. The seminars were running once a week for five years. (...) At this moment, the seminars take place weekly and last approximately three and a half hours – they are composed of an hour-long lecture and the rest is the commented reading of classic texts. (Daniel Kroupa, letter to JHEF, 7th April 1988)

Like Patočka, Kroupa also selected his students, rather than holding a seminar group open to the non-conformist network. After all, his project clearly required systematicity and the intention was to establish a structured, pseudo-academic school of philosophy. To the soon-to-be students of his seminars, this signalled an ethos of profound devotion to the intellectual pursuit and philosophy as a discipline, which motivated the students to 'work very hard' (interview 9). One of his students remembers how he appreciated Kroupa's questioning and selection:

[A friend of mine] told me about this Daniel and his project. She said that I should go see him, and that [Daniel] would decide whether I would be accepted in the group. It was the end of summer, I remember, and I liked it. Daniel questioned me, I liked that, I liked the whole environment. I think he told me to read Plato's *Apology*, and then we met in a few days and discussed it. (interview 5)

According to the student, it was already in this first discussion that Kroupa enacted a charismatic performance with the help of his skill in textual analysis and presentation of meanings – something that can be seen as a part of the *mise-en-scène*:

We had an evening with the *Apology*, Socrates' defence, where Daniel absolutely enchanted me. (...) I was strongly drawn to him, to him as a teacher as well as to what I thought he could teach me. (...) He interpreted Plato. Well, an exegesis of Plato is something that often entices beginners. They suddenly see many things that they would not otherwise notice if they just read it by themselves. But when there is a philosopher who can pull these things from the text and lay them in front of you, it's something else completely. Daniel had probably learned many things from Patočka, but he himself was an excellent teacher. (interview 5)

The student also describes Kroupa's intense teaching style, a particular form of performance action that afforded the emergence of these impressive symbolic forms. His close reading was, according to interviewees, something not common at universities at that time. Kroupa's student describes it:

We read paragraph by paragraph, but we really discussed these paragraphs. Often, the entire three hours were spent on just one of them. If we had read more than one page [of the text], that was a very fast evening (...). It was very systematic. For me, this was the formative group in which I went from the point zero to having some basic philosophical knowledge. To this day, when I convene seminars, I try to emulate what he was doing, this Daniel's close reading. (...) They must have studied like this with Patočka because all the people who studied with him convened seminars in this way¹⁴. (interview 5)

What is clear here is that the 'enchantment' that the student describes stems from the ability of the teacher to demonstrate their knowledge through the interpretation of a text in question, to juggle its meanings, and show the audience the path for exploring and applying the content of the text. To the students, this signified extraordinary noetic ability and scholarly potential of the teacher, something they found inspiring. The charismatic educator was becoming a role model very much along the lines of Merton's initial definition of the concept as 'reference individual' to whom others 'seek to approximate [their] behaviour' (Merton, 1996: 357). In fact, as the interview fragment suggests, it was a second-generation of role models, since Kroupa himself was, by mimicking Patočka's style that his own student would emulate later, seeking to recreate the late philosopher's charisma in himself as well as the magic of his seminars.

The interview segment above reveals also another similarity to Patočka. As the student notes twice, Kroupa's charismatic appeal was further elevated by his association (and

¹⁴ As Patočka said in an interview in 1967, he picked up the close reading style during his studies in France and Germany (Zumr, 1967).

the association of his pedagogic technique) with the iconic figure Jan Patočka himself, Kroupa's teacher who was regarded as the martyr of the civil rights movement. According to Kroupa's student, it was also generally the nature of the seminar convener's connection to the Charter network and other unofficial philosophers, which contributed to his charismatic appeal:

Part of the enchantment was also due to Daniel's environment. In some sense, it was even better to see that the philosopher is not some loner who thinks alone someplace, but someone who can give the student everything that the tradition has to offer. (interview 5)

Kroupa closely guarded this association of his seminar with Patočka's legacy. One of the participants recalls a moment, in which the convener even challenged one of his students for the leadership of the seminar because the latter's interpretation of Husserl undermined his own understanding developed in his studies with Jan Patočka:

There was a (...) student with whom we parted ways eventually because his opinions were incommensurable [with Kroupa's] and his presence was disruptive to the seminar. He tried to put forth some kind of his own interpretation of Husserl, and this became so obnoxious [to Kroupa] that he said: if you really believe that your interpretation is so important, please, try to explain it to the group and persuade them to explore that path with you. If this would be the case, [Kroupa said], we shall remain friends, but I will step aside and organise another group with which I will continue in the direction set by Patočka. [The Student] tried to present his perspective, but the group rejected it. Well, but [Kroupa's] condition was that if this happens, the student would leave. (interview 9)

The student who left the seminar confirms the account:

Yes, I did leave the seminar because of our conflict regarding the interpretation of Husserl's works. (...) I think it was due to my temperament, lack of respect for authorities. If I remember correctly, I was frustrated when, more than just a few times, Daniel concluded our debate over some problem in Husserl's philosophy by saying that Patočka's opinion on this issue was such and such, and that was the end of discussion, "Roma locuta, causa finita", which, naturally, irritated me a lot because I wanted to discuss and argue further. (interview 16)

The performer's decision to part ways with the student was indeed a move intended to force out a subversive element in the audience. I have shown earlier that shared amazement and attention can be conducive to charismatic appearance when the actors in the audience confirm their adulation through visually inspecting similar attitude on the bodies of others. A querulous student, on the other hand, can be destructive by

undermining the authority of the performer, disputing and questioning the narratives delivered. In other words, they can disrupt the social power of the actor, the seamless appearance of intellectual virtuosity that grants legitimacy to the elevated status of the actor as a charismatic performer. Interventions of this sort may throw the actor off their balance and subvert the natural-like mien of their performance, in which the prepared and rehearsed is made to seem improvised yet seamless, and which is so central to the success of performances (Alexander, 2011: 4). Patočka himself, according to another interviewee, occasionally expelled students from his seminars: ‘once there was an older colleague, a Dominican, and he was so petulant. He had problems with everything all the time. It ended with Patočka simply kicking him out of the room during a Kantian seminar’ (interviewee 2).

In the example of Kroupa’s student, however, the miscreant also seemed to have threatened the deeper, symbolic core of the seminar’s legitimacy. As both quotes show, the main issue was that the student failed to accept the ulterior motive of the seminar – to safeguard the interpretations that the convener learned from his own charismatic teacher, Jan Patočka, who by then was also the martyr of the non-conformist network. Whether wittingly or not, by disputing Patočka’s interpretations sanctified by his martyrdom, the student was undermining the legitimacy of the philosopher’s consecration as the sacred sage of the non-conformist community – and hence the rationale for the seminar.

Kroupa’s charisma was at the same time fuelled not only by the connection to Patočka and social power he held over the seminar but also by his devotion to his students and the interest he took in their work outside of the seminar. As another remembered,

Daniel was keenly interested in my dissertation, which I have written while studying at the [official] theology program (it explored the relationship between philosophy and theology). He read it completely through, added comments, and, eventually, also managed to get it published in the samizdat journal *Paraf*. (interview 9)

In other words, while enticing the students in his seminars and consolidating the group, he also built relationships with them through a willingness to engage and help beyond the unofficial classroom. These relationships with his regular audiences were

personalised, concerned with specific problems of specific students, recasting thus the actor into a double position of both a teacher and a mentor.

As I demonstrated in this section, one of the fundamental aspects of charismatic performances of unofficial seminar conveners was the ability to enact access to deep and profound forms of knowledge – and assume a strong moral position reminiscent of mystical sages. I introduced two examples of unofficial philosophers of two different generations: Jan Patočka and Daniel Kroupa. As I demonstrated throughout the section, both performers shared marked similarities: they often selected their seminar participants rather than holding open lectures, giving an air of exclusivity and seriousness, and both enticed students through their ability to interpret texts and conjure up meanings. These were the meanings associated with intellectual profundity, the deep cultural meanings such as truth, good or beauty. The symbolic power of both performers was yet elevated by their mentor-mentee relationship with other iconic figures. In Patočka's case, these figures were Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. For Kroupa, the figure was Patočka himself. But there was also a marked difference between their approaches. While Patočka was a critical exegete of the two iconic phenomenologists and included his students in their re-evaluation, Kroupa considered his intellectual mission to be the preservation of his late teacher's legacy.

Patočka's case is particularly interesting because his charismatic performances, in which he enacted spontaneous access to philosophical knowledge and creativity, had the power to draw actors to his proximity and establish closer social relations with him, the central performer. Furthermore, the persona that he established was so attractive that it motivated both his students and colleagues to step out of the institutionalised academia and form a relatively independent group. Some of Patočka's students, over time, became his charismatic aristocracy, the most populous and consolidated case of such a group in the sphere of unofficial philosophy. Not only were they devoted listeners; they also created opportunities and prepared Patočka's performances, stabilising his image in the wider network of non-conformist actors. In the case of Daniel Kroupa, one of Patočka's students, and a member of the extended circle of his charismatic aristocracy, there was a similar ability to demonstrate understanding over classical texts. As a student expressed it, the enchantment was created by his teacher's ability to conjure up

meanings, to performatively demonstrate a kind of knowledge that was, up to that moment, hidden from the audience.

The Taskmasters: The Charisma of Disciplinary Rigour

The ability to display deeper knowledge was not the only feature that enticed students at unofficial seminars. Besides the sage-like script, there were also the ‘taskmasters’. In modern societies, the various professions engendered in the process of labour division (Parsons, 1939) and competition (Abbott, 1988) distinguish themselves – besides the manifest objective of their pursuits and forms of knowledge they employ – also by performance elements such as attire (Bazin and Aubert-Tarby, 2013) or the use of language (Mertz, 2007). Philosophers also possess a system of requirements that sanctions their belonging into the professional community. Among actors who participated in unofficial philosophy and who often lacked formal education in the discipline, these were scarce traits that could potentially distinguish an individual as an intellectual authority among their less-prepared peers. Here, I refer to the ability to dramatize serious engagement with the discipline, rigorousness in study and teaching, as well as the ability to emulate practices that are standard in the regular academic context. To their students, this professionalism signalled that, rather than a pastime or distraction, unofficial philosophy was a serious undertaking and that its goal was to create an autonomous intellectual discourse that, in terms of quality and rigour, was meant to exceed its official counterpart.

This striving for professionalism compensated for the looming threat of dilettantism, perceived among unofficial philosophers, at least some of whom realised that without rigorous peer-review and mechanisms of academic examination, they ran the risk of amateurish obscurantism. As one of my interviewees remarked,

this was one of the dangers of the underground philosophy, that there were people who were well-prepared for doing philosophy as such, as well as those who were very ill-prepared, at least in terms of the technicalities of the discipline. But the question [of dilettantism] haunted all of us. (interview 12)

Unofficial philosophers had concerns about their disciplinary prowess already in the 1980s, which is clear from a secret police file that documents a meeting of three seminar

organisers over a scathing review published in a samizdat journal. Here, the police officer writes:

(...) The group discussed a review written by [the Critic], leading to sharp conflict between [Philosopher 1] and [Philosopher 2]. [Philosopher 1] claimed that there are blatant lies [in the review], against which the subject cannot defend himself. (...) [Philosopher 1] said that he did not know why [the Critic] does these things. [Philosopher 3] said that she understands why he does it, because “golden calves” ought to be burned. (...) [Philosopher 3] said that the article is an attack on the nonsensical position of [the Criticized] because he is somebody who simply should not convene a philosophy seminar. According to her, [the Criticized] is a completely different kind of man. [Philosopher 2] said that many people share [the Critic’s] opinion but are afraid to say anything out loud, even write it down. (KR-839864 MV)

In other words, professionalism and rigour were debated topics among unofficial philosophers. Some were able to effectively perform without sufficient expertise, even become the ‘golden calves’ for their students, especially if they were able to enact access to deeper knowledge spectacularly enough (incidentally, this was indeed the case of ‘the Criticized’ from the segment above). Yet, lack of rigour could provoke the criticism of others and jeopardize the spiral of their charismatic performances.

An example of an unofficial philosophy taskmaster who appealed to his students by his professionalism and intellectual rigour was Ladislav Hejdánek (1927). Hejdánek was one of the central figures of the non-conformist network, in particular its (partially overlapping) philosophical and Evangelical circles. He entered the sphere of unofficial philosophy in the 1940s when Jan Patočka invited him to his private seminar on Heidegger’s book *The Essence of Truth*. In the 1950s and 60s, Hejdánek worked towards Marxist-Christian dialogue, closely associated with other important Christian intellectuals such as Jan Lukl Hromádka, Milan Balabán, Jakub Trojan, or Jiří Němec. He was one of the organisers of the Jircháře project, which I identified in *Chapter 3* as one of the key precursors to the unofficial seminars of the 1970s and 80s. Between 1968 and 1971, Hejdánek worked at the philosophy department of the Academy of Czechoslovak Sciences but lost his position in 1971. In the same year, Hejdánek was jailed for supposed participation in a protest leaflet campaign and sentenced to 9 months in prison. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, he worked as a night watchman, stoker, and warehouseman.

Hejdánek convened systematic unofficial seminars from the early 1970s, catering to the audience of the students of the Evangelical Faculty of Charles University, where he had been an adjunct in late 1960s. The most intense period of unofficial teaching came after 1980, when Hejdánek took over the unofficial seminar of Julius Tomin, who emigrated to the United Kingdom, and became also a point of contact for the Jan Hus Educational Foundation as well as Association Jan Hus. Over the decade, he convened systematic courses on topics integral to his own philosophical project, steeped in the continental tradition, theology, as well as the natural sciences: philosophical cosmology, political philosophy or ethics. Hejdánek was also a prominent political activist, serving as the Charter 77 spokesperson twice between 1977 and 1979. His seminar was open to the public, and therefore often targeted by the police.

As Hejdánek's former student recalls, he fascinated his audiences especially with his disciplinary rigour and demanding attitude:

When you went to Hejdánek, you simply had to work. You couldn't just come and listen to his seminars. He requested thorough preparation, he had great demands. Well, I mean, you could technically just come over but then you had to keep your mouth shut and better not show that you were swimming in it. (interview 6)

According to another of his students, however, it was exactly the demands and requirements established by Hejdánek that prompted him to choose the seminar among other alternatives:

There were more such schools in Prague. Some were regular, they really had the character of a university course with a beginning and a conclusion. I probably even now don't know about all of them or I just don't remember them anymore. Anyway, I decided to join Lád'a Hejdánek's seminar, which took place in the Vinohrady neighbourhood on Slovenská St, because I considered it the most rigorous. He was very thorough, and it had a proper system. It had normal semesters, Fall and Spring, nothing was random, everything was organised. (interview 2)

Further, the student recalls how his own background, located in the bohemian counterculture, made him even more appreciative to Hejdánek's approach. Charisma, after all, is often a matter of contrast and, as Joosse notes, already Weber's original conceptualization contains the quality of being 'set apart' from others (Joosse, 2018: 923). This distinction does not need to be in contrast with the currently hegemonic

authority (e.g. the state), but simply different from the everyday experiences of the initiate:

His precision fascinated me. And it was so especially because I was a son of the underground counter-culture, which was all about poetry and fighting. Poetry, fight, music. It was nothing like his methodical, philosophical precision. (...) His perfectionism as well as the ability of deep analysis, and how he linked it all to the natural laws, that was all profoundly interesting to me. You didn't get that in the counter-culture. (interview 2)

Here, it is clear that students were drawn not only by the enactment of deep symbols but also by demonstrations of rigour. This was the quality that set the taskmasters apart both from other performers in the non-conformist network, who placed less emphasis on systematicity and outcome, as well as from the educators in official academia (or their image among non-conformists). As Hejdlánek's student notes, the audience of his performances regarded them as 'a part of our regular education, no doubt about that' (interview 2). He conveyed to the audience the message that even though the circumstances of their studies were highly irregular, what they were receiving was akin to a standard philosophy education.

Another of the central figures of the unofficial network and a seminar convener of the younger generation, Petr Rezek (1948), was the pure realisation of the taskmaster ideal type. Rezek studied psychology and philosophy at Charles University, partially also under the tutelage of Jan Patočka, and spent the 1970s working as a clinical psychologist before signing the Charter 77, and then working in manual employments. Besides his professional engagements, Rezek was deeply involved in the emerging sphere of unofficial philosophy as well as art theory and the theory of architecture. He published samizdat books on topics such as the phenomenology of happening or performance art, Fluxus, and minimalism. Rezek worked with Kroupa's seminar group and convened their seminars on Husserl. In the 1980s, he collaborated closely with the Jan Hus Educational Foundation, and, with the foundation's assistance, he convened courses on Plato and Kant. In the network of unofficial philosophy, Rezek was also known for his acerbic wit and reviews of samizdat philosophy publications, which severely criticised the lack of intellectual rigour and excessive sentimentalism.

A student, then a participant in Kroupa's seminars, recalls that already at the end of the 1970s, Rezek, then in his early 30s, was a renowned figure in the network. Especially in

the field of art theory, he was considered to be ‘the best man around’ (interview 5) or even ‘a star, whom I didn’t really understand, who talked about things I did not really get, but he was really worth seeing’ (interview 5). His direct experience with this figure came later, when

in 1980 or 81, Daniel Kroupa, during our regular Husserl meeting, said that he met Rezek at the university library. Oh, already by then I have heard from quite a few people stories about how Rezek always sat at the university library, whenever they went there, Rezek sat there and he studied. This impressed me very much. (...) Daniel said that they chatted, since they knew each other from Patočka’s lectures, and that he agreed that Rezek would join the Husserl course, which was just taking off with the *Cartesian Meditations*, but that we will switch to *Logical Investigations*, because that was something [Rezek] wanted to do and he needed some advanced and focused audience. (interview 5)

To the student, Rezek’s rumoured routine of daily study signalled disciplined devotion to the intellectual mission of philosophy. From the perspective of performance theory, however, it should be noted that in this case the actor facilitated the emergence of his charismatic persona – of a rigorous, outstandingly educated intellectual – in seminar performances through his everyday presentation. These small-scale presentational performances were instrumental in establishing his reputation, and, in this case, also created opportunities to demonstrate his abilities in front of a new audience. As the student puts it, ‘he was perfect in this kind of PR, and managed, in this half-world below the official life, to become a star’ (interview 5).

The most important part of his success was his discipline and rigour as well as exceptional adherence to what his students saw as academic standards. As noted by the student,

he was the only one who taught us something like professionalism. Many others were smarter, perhaps more inspiring, but no one in the whole unofficial seminars scene taught us the real professional work. That means secondary literature, the ability to review and present, these common skills. Yes, they tried, but no one was really good with things like the secondary literature, although we had known that we should be proficient at this. They were used to take it easy, it seemed to me... like here we do some philosophy with a bunch of friends, nothing super serious. Had we not met Petr [Rezek], we would have been significantly less prepared for our eventual academic careers. (interview 5)

Similarly to Hejdánek, Rezek was able to performatively transform unofficial seminars from unprofessional level, in this student's words doing 'philosophy with a bunch of friends', to a university-like undertaking. This made him stand out in comparison to others. At the same time, Rezek's methods seemed also unconventional to his students who were used to Kroupa's slow style of close reading:

The plan was to discuss one *Investigation* in one sitting. The book [Husserl's *Logical Investigations*] comprises seven parts. The sixth is quite long, I think we didn't manage that, but we otherwise went quite quickly, in ten or twelve sittings, through the Husserl's huge tome. Petr [Rezek] had a motto that we needed to find one sentence through which we could interpret the whole *Investigation*. We loved that, Daniel didn't do such things, and to us this seemed like an intellectual stunt. (interview 5)

Soon, with his rigour and eclectic education, the taskmaster Rezek steered his audience, originally assembled by the sage Kroupa, towards new exciting projects which were based on his reputation. One was the Kant seminar prepared by Ralph C. S. Walker from Oxford's Magdalen College. As the student remembered:

It was a very successful course in its consequences. There were very good people around it. Petr [Rezek] offered it to us. I think it may have been somehow behind Daniel's back. I don't know, we all were used to not to talk about the organisational matters, so he may have known a little, but he didn't participate. (interview 5)

In other words, what is evident here is that two different performers – each of them different in their structure of charisma and pedagogic approach – competed indirectly over an existent group of students, with one of them eventually stepping aside. This had likely much to do with the gradual growth of competence of the students as well as Rezek's performances – his writing, his wide-ranging and eclectic command of cultural forms, his rigour and demands. Thanks to these qualities, he seems to have been able to remain inspiring and challenging to his audiences for longer than the more sagely Kroupa who was concerned with enshrining Patočka's legacy and whose expertise lay dominantly in the field of Greek philosophy.

It is perhaps fitting to note that this takeover cannot be understood in the framework of a non-performance theory, e.g. that of Collins (1998). With a framework that highlights prestige or social position, it would be necessary to conclude that Rezek was able to draw the students into his own seminar due to his better network connections, thanks to

which he was more effective in creating rituals that generated emotional energy. But this was not true. In terms of the non-conformist network in the late 1970s, both Kroupa and Rezek came from the most illustrious of pedigrees – they were direct students of Patočka – and both were well embedded in the unofficial philosophy scene. It can be argued that Kroupa, who organised with Martin Palouš an advanced circle of philosophers called *Kampademie*, which included among others Václav Havel, the most prominent Czechoslovak dissident, was perhaps embedded even better than Rezek who, as I demonstrate in the next chapter, systematically antagonized other unofficial philosophers with sharp criticism. Yet, Rezek was likely the better of the two performers. His demanding approach, systematic progress, as well as his command of various interdisciplinary cultural forms, made him a more interesting performer, capable of luring away parts of Kroupa's audience.

In this section, I have discussed the second key performance script enacted by unofficial philosophers: that of the taskmaster. The ability to present oneself persuasively as leading the life of a standard academic, requiring an appropriate level of output quality from oneself as well as the audience, was a prized ability among the members of the non-conformist network. It also seems to have been relatively rare. While there were several actors in the network who were able to enact deep understanding and exclusive knowledge, not many had the necessary experience and resources (both Hejdánek and Rezek had extensive libraries, well-supplied from abroad, and opened to students) sufficient for preparation and enactment of such performances. As my interviewees agreed, it was this feature of professionalism that set their teachers apart from other philosophers and prompted them to choose their seminars.

Neither a Sage nor a Taskmaster: Divisive Performances in Unofficial Philosophy

While the previous section explored two characteristic scripts enacted to various degrees by unofficial philosophers, here, I will explore several divisive – or even failed – performances. These are occasions when actors antagonised audiences. They bring to the fore the importance of mutual resonance between the actor and their audience. I also show that rather than a unified entity, the audience is a collective of actors with

individually structured dispositions to fall for a charismatic performance. It is necessary to note that I am not suggesting that performances of the figures above were always seamless and effective (I already highlighted Kroupa's miscreant), or that the philosopher below failed constantly. The choice of examples is merely a matter of having data which allow me to show the dynamics of a divisive performance enacted by a reportedly controversial intellectual.

The first example is Julius Tomin (1938), the philosopher responsible for the Oxford connection. Tomin had a chequered past, which included two years spent in a labour camp for conscientious objection to military service and attempt to leave Czechoslovakia without official permission. In the late 1960s, he enrolled at a doctoral programme at Charles University under the supervision of Milan Machovec and participated in his seminar as well as the Jircháře platform, which I have identified as two precursors to the unofficial seminar scene of the 1970s and 80s. Between 1969 and 1970, Tomin lived in the US, where he worked as an adjunct at the University of Hawaii. After he returned, unable to find an academic job, he became a turbine operator in the Prague waterworks and later a night watchman in the Prague zoo. In 1978, he began lecturing unofficially and soon assembled a group of non-conformist students who listened to his exegeses of classic Greek philosophy – on which he claimed to be the country's foremost expert.

Tomin's style of performing was somewhat close to the script of the sage. As interviews and secret police files evince, he was not a systematic teacher and rather introduced his students to some fundamental topics of Greek philosophy and culture. He often conveyed a clear moral message. In a 1978 seminar, for example, according to a police report, he talked on 'good and evil (...) which referenced the current era. The lecture in principle discussed the lawlessness in ancient Rome and Greece and compared it to our political situation' (KR-705731 MV). Tomin, however, diverged from the script of moral sage by being prone to rabble-rousing. He was a proponent of radical openness who 'intentionally promulgated the meetings all around, so that when some guests came from England, they all got arrested' (interview 3). Rather than delivering the performances in thoroughly guarded privacy, Tomin wished the state to become a part of his audience. He incessantly wrote letters to state institutions and visited universities or research institutes to invite them to his seminar.

One of my interviewees, the person who later joined Kroupa's and Rezek's groups, recalls his experience with Tomin:

I found out that Tomin was opening a new class. Of course, I somehow knew about him, this interesting character that the police always had to carry away¹⁵. Of course, I was interested, and I wanted to participate. However, the first meeting that I went to was entirely just him reading some comedy by Aristophanes, and translating it on the spot into Czech. Yes, I know today that it was a tour de force, and that to do this, he must have been very good in Greek, but at that time I could not see that. Anyway, it was something that I was just not interested in. Also, I knew that his group was much riskier than any other, because Tomin's students were commonly picked up by the police. (...) And simply, he just was not as appealing as other conveners and (...) his students were not that appealing too. (...) I admired him, of course, but he was just different, different from the dissidents, different from the counter-culture, different from the folks at home. He looked like... if you know the term... a bruiser. Somebody who revels in conflicts. (interview 5)

Here, it is clear that several factors rendered Tomin uncharismatic to his student during a meeting which, as secret police documents reveal, probably occurred at Tomin's flat on 14th June 1979, and at which the actor translated Aristophanes' *Wasps*. First, the performer failed to appeal by the fundamental feats of his personal presentation. Far from what the actor expected from a philosopher, and what they later found with Kroupa and Rezek, Tomin appeared to him as a rough and conflict-seeking educator, something that did not resonate with them. Second, the script of the performance itself did not resonate with the individual who, in his own words, was 'interested in philosophy' (interview 5) rather than a classic Greek play. Incidentally, had the participant chose another evening, he may have heard more on Parmenides, Plato, or Aristoteles, Tomin's usual topics. The performance failed to move the participant, and he considered the benefit of participation to be lower than the potential risk of police intervention:

had he talked about something that I was hungry for, about philosophy, this kind of threat would probably not have discouraged me and, in a sense, young people are crazy, you know, I would probably not minded getting sacked from the school for this. (interview 5)

¹⁵ Tomin was a proponent of a version of the Gandhian non-cooperation strategy and refused to comply with the police orders, resulting in the officers forcibly carrying him to their station.

In the case of Tomin, this was likely not a singular case of a disenchanted student, as a secret police report pertaining to another philosopher, reveals a former member of his audience claiming that

Tomin's lectures were mainly a propagation of his own person, to elicit, by provoking the police, sympathies in the West, rather than really teaching philosophy. This was clear from the very low level of [philosophical erudition of] his participants and his style of teaching. (KR-830053 MV)

This shows that charismatic performances are shaped by the resonance occurring between the scripts enacted, the presentation of the actors, and their ability to mobilise the elements in an impressive *mise-en-scène*, as well as the audience. While some constellations of scripts and presentation may be appealing to particular audiences, they may also antagonise others and fail to produce the intended ritual effect. This was the case of the two participants above. While Tomin's performances were often successful, and, as I demonstrate in *Chapter 7*, he did manage to spawn togetherness and a sense of emancipation among his audience, he was likely the most divisive figure of the unofficial philosophy scene. As a rule, he seemed to have resonated better with the counter-cultural part of the network, people who demanded less of the rigorous intellectual engagement (such as Rezek offered) and lacked formal education or explicit academic ambition in philosophy. They enjoyed his uncompromising style of lecturing and heroic stunts, such as continuing his lecture in prison after the group was arrested one evening.

This divisiveness also seems to have determined Tomin's eventual career. After he left Czechoslovakia in 1980 and accepted visiting fellowships in the UK, first at Cambridge and then Oxford University's Balliol College, he quickly fell out with the dons. The reason was especially his obsession with Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus*, which Tomin claims to belong to Plato's early works – contrary to the current consensus that Plato wrote it late in his life. Due to this obsession and relentlessness, Tomin became seen as a burden to the people who helped him out of Czechoslovakia and supported him in Britain. Throughout the 1980s, Tomin petitioned the university and held hunger-strikes to be allowed to lecture on his discovery. Despite not being allowed this, he managed to acquire a degree of popularity lecturing on philosophy in a Swindon pub, whose owner, smitten with the non-conformist philosopher, travelled to Czechoslovakia in 1988 and

got himself arrested for protesting publicly on Tomin's behalf in Prague (Leighton, 2014).

The expectations of the audience and the performer clashed occasionally also in the case of foreign lecturers who visited Czechoslovakia. While their participation was welcomed as moral support, many struggled to enact charismatic performances due to language differences (seminars were usually translated sentence-by-sentence) or specificities of the non-conformist network. Exceptions appeared: Roger Scruton, Jean-Paul Vernant or Paul Ricoeur visited Czechoslovakia repeatedly and had a community of devoted listeners. Occasionally, significant problems arose from unexpected ideological discordance between visitors and locals. As the historian Tony Judt noted in his report:

The second talk had to be cancelled. According to Alena H. [Hromádková], this was partly because Christmas caused other preoccupations, but mostly because the previous speaker to [Kučera's] group had been a Frenchman¹⁶, of the marxo-liberation-theology persuasion. There had been complete mutual incomprehension and, eventually, hostility. He had presumed to tell a bunch of Czech intellectuals working as stokers, window-cleaners, etc., what the proletariat is really like... They decided never to hear another word about or by the French Left! I sympathise, but it shows a need for improved communications – Alena was very embarrassed and apologetic. (Tony Judt, JHEF Report, 1986)

Incidentally, Judt was likely not going to lecture on the contentious topic, as Stephen Lukes warned the JHEF earlier, after his own visit to Prague, that 'Judt should lecture on liberty and rights and not, please, on French Marxism' (Stephen Lukes, JHEF Report, 1986). Similar conflicts, caused by mixed expectations on both sides, occurred occasionally. Another is remembered by a student participant:

this was in Ječná street [Jiří Němec's flat], and we were visited by two theologians of liberation from Latin America. So, we sat down, a lot of us, about forty, and they began to piffle. We listened for about ten minutes and we were absolutely flabbergasted because it was such a Marxism. Well, I and Ivan Lamper¹⁷ stood up and (...) we loudly said that we won't listen to this Bolshevik bullshit. And we left. Many people couldn't forgive this impoliteness, but I just said what I thought. (interview 2)

¹⁶ This was probably the French philosopher Stanislas Breton (1912-2005)

¹⁷ Ivan Lamper (1957) – Czech journalist

In this example, it was ideological discordance, not features of the actor's presentation, that antagonised some members of their audience. Unlike Czechoslovak philosophers, Western visitors lacked the knowledge of local discourses and the necessary experience with the milieu. This led them to occasionally select topics that either entirely missed the structure of knowledge of non-conformist audiences and ran the risk of eliciting no interest at all or, worse, provoking a backlash from dissatisfied audience. As I demonstrated in the second case, such a backlash was a performance itself, one that sought to prevent the success of the lecture by the demonstrative display of dissatisfaction and theatrical disruption of the audience's unity.

In a successful performance, there is a fragile balance between the ideological outlook presented and enacted by the actor and the values harboured by their audiences. Complete homology between their positions and knowledge is not necessary, and may even hinder the effect of performance, which is facilitated by the ability of the performing actors to persuade the audience that there are forms of knowledge to which only they, the performer, possess the key. Often, successful performances are those that persuade their audience to reconsider their perspective on a problem in question. At the same time, however, performers have to be mindful of the structure of the cultural system, the coding of the sacred-profane binary and corresponding 'intellectual no-go zones' (Bartmanski, 2012), that informs the outlook as well as the emotional lives of the members of the audience. While not for all, for some circles within the Czechoslovak non-conformist network, Marxism was such a 'no-go zone' and had, despite clear symbolic incommensurability, the resonance that fascism probably would have among many in current Western academia.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the charisma of unofficial philosophers. As I argued, there were two fundamental scripts, that of the sage and the taskmaster, which made particular unofficial philosophers stand out in comparison to others. While one rested on demonstration of intellectual virtuosity with regard to profound symbols, something that is perhaps often seen as wisdom, the other highlighted rigorousness and hard work. Successful performances, however, needed to be well-calibrated and balanced, and as I

showed in the final section, more aggressive or ideologically alien approach could potentially divide audiences or fail to elicit the interest of the non-conformist audience.

To see intellectual performances and charisma creation through cultural scripts offers an important improvement to the existing theory of intellectual role enactment, advanced for example by Eyerman (2011). According to Eyerman, the role of an intellectual involves articulation of ideas for audiences with the goal of influencing their opinion. How this social role is understood 'is contingent upon cultural traditions' (Eyerman, 2011: 455). The role of the intellectual, however, is protean and relies on a combination of existing cultural scripts – the sage, the taskmaster, and the rabble-rouser are ones among many others.

Sociologies of intellectuals such as that of Collins, who claims that 'much of what we consider individual personality consists of the extent to which persons carry the energy of intense [interaction rituals]' (Collins, 1998: 23) cannot provide necessary insight into the processes of charismatic attraction and dynamics of intellectual appeal. Here, intellectuals simply are or are not appealing, since they either are or are not charged with emotional energy. There is no place for skill nor for circumstantiality. Without paying attention to what and how they perform, the readers are left wondering why even highly charged intellectuals occasionally fail, and why even intellectuals without wide prestige and resources can grasp the interest of their audience and spawn a following. In the examples above, it is hard to see what one could possibly gain from attending the lectures of the 65-year-old retiree Patočka, a man who was so poor that he lived with his daughter's family and could not afford a typewriter. Others were only slightly better off. Kroupa, during the time of his intensive educational pursuits, was a manual labourer, Hejdánek worked in a warehouse, and Rezek was an apartment building caretaker.

A performance approach to intellectuals offers the benefit of seeing that there is more to intellectual life than prestige-oriented pursuits, pragmatic training of followers, and textualized ideas. Intellectuals succeed through performances, through enacting efficient scripts in impressive contexts and ultimately persuading their audiences that they are individuals who are worth being listened to and even followed outside of official institutions. To successfully produce the charismatic effect, however, these scripts need to be rooted in a wider landscape of meaning, which makes them meaningful to both

audiences and the performers themselves. As I demonstrate in the next chapter, what facilitated the success of these unofficial philosophers was the presence of such symbols, and their ability to use them in order to argue their intellectual excellence as well as moral purity, which supposedly made them ‘the only true’ philosophers in Czechoslovakia.

CHAPTER 6: The Masters of Truth: Boundary-Work and the Meaning of Philosophy in the Czechoslovak Non-Conformist Network

*Wine is unrighteous, the king is
unrighteous, women are unrighteous, all
human beings are unrighteous, all their
works are unrighteous, and all such things.
There is no truth in them and in their
unrighteousness they will perish. But truth
endures and is strong forever, and lives and
prevails forever and ever.*

1 Esdras 4: 37-38

*The illusion of the Czech underground was
the belief that its authenticity and verve
stemmed from their origin in the vital
needs, as well as the persuasion that it
fundamentally differed from the academism
of “phonebooks”, as the future teachers at
our universities (the diamonds of Czech
philosophy) spitefully called the works of
their future colleagues, whom they would
later visit for fellowships, and in whose
countries they would establish themselves
in order to acquire access to the public
resources in their own country.*

(Rezek, 2007: 203)

In the previous chapter, I explored how unofficial philosophers appeared charismatic to their audiences. I identified two important scripts, the sage and the taskmaster, which set some unofficial philosophers apart from others. At the end, I also explored examples

of divisive performers, arguing that in order to entice audiences in a charismatic performance, intellectuals must seek the fragile balance between their ability and expectations of the audience. I concluded the chapter by saying that the scripts such as the sage and the taskmaster need to be enacted upon a system of symbols that renders them meaningful to the audience. I understand this system through the metaphor of the 'landscape of meanings' (Reed, 2011), which seeks to capture the complex of symbolic structures that 'forms the motivations that force' (Reed, 2011: 148) actors to act in particular way. In this chapter, I explore the landscape of symbols that underpinned the emergence and continuation of unofficial seminars and, of course, try to identify the meanings that were central to this process. Thus, I answer my second research question.

When it comes to conflict and dispute, which are integral to the lives of intellectuals, sociology has traditionally been dominated by accounts which focus on the natural sciences and especially on the social processes by which individual researchers and collectives amass institutional positions, social power, reputation, and prestige in order to put forth their intellectual programs (Barnes, 1977; Frickel and Gross, 2005; MacKenzie, 1981). Even notable exceptions concerned with humanities, such as the work of Baert and Morgan (2015), follow this vein of research, focusing on institutional conflicts. Yet, this perspective seems to be inapplicable to the case of unofficial philosophers. For them, even having articles published in publicly available journals was, in the absolute majority of cases, impossible. Institutional positions were out of the question. The best they could hope for was to be invited to an official seminar by a former colleague or lecture to a public audience in some club or society. Usually, their work took place in private flats and was published in journals that were read by dozens of people at most. Despite that, and indeed because of that, much of their writing was concerned with negotiating the position of their work vis-à-vis the philosophy produced at official institutions. Why were their works and activities worthy of the name 'philosophy'? However, their discourse was unilateral. The 'officials', unsurprisingly, never replied.

To investigate the unofficial philosophy's landscape of meaning and identify its central symbols and conceptions, I take the lens of boundary-work. According to Gieryn, boundary-work is the process by which people 'define "science" by attributing [to it] characteristics that spatially segregate it from other territories in the cultural landscape'

(Gieryn, 1997: 440). The lifeworld of Western intellectuals and academics is one in which originality – even moderate or moderated – is a prized asset that is both the driving force and legitimation vehicle for institutional, social, and discursive success (Guetzkow et al., 2004). To acquire reputation and legitimacy as creators, individuals and groups must distinguish themselves from others (and other fields) and establish their approach as a viable and fruitful form of inquiry. They must create symbolic boundaries that relegate their competitors to the field of the non-scientific, illegitimate zone. I regard the concept of boundary-work as a well-designed tool that enables us to explore how intellectuals distinguish themselves from others, and by implication, how they understand their place in social reality.

The concept of boundary-work emerged in the context of research exploring the turf wars of scientists, their pursuit of prestige and institutional dominance. As Baert and Morgan noted, however, the delegitimization of particular individuals and disciplines in the field of intellectual pursuits has occasionally moral undertones (Morgan and Baert, 2015: 61). The perpetrators of academic coups castigate their opponents and their scholarly works as threats to the sacred symbols of their discipline – for example, overt adherence to the canon, or, on the other hand, iconoclasm. I follow and extend this line of research to argue that the symbols that creatively emerge in the process of boundary-work have consequences for the structure and functioning of the intellectual community. As unofficial philosophers distinguished themselves from the officials and asserted their own academic legitimacy and noetic superiority in moral terms, with symbols drawing on phenomenology, religious discourse, as well as imagined national tradition, they produced an understanding of philosophy that was well-calibrated to enhance their individual charismatic appeal. Rather than philosophers by achievement, they cast themselves as philosophers by attitude. They performed philosophy as it was, according to them, originally meant to be performed – as a form of understanding and expression driven by vital need rather than a career choice, intended to realise its full potential in unfavourable circumstances. In turn, this discourse legitimised their claims of academic quality (as their ideas were interpreted as pure and true) and shielded them from any professional criticism.

Thus, I answer my second research question: what were the meanings that underpinned the emergence and continuation of unofficial seminars? Rather than intellectual

superiority as such, it was a sense of moral distinction that at the same time enhanced the charismatic perception of philosophical performances. Drawing on reviews of philosophical works in samizdat journals, with occasional references to my other data sources, I develop this answer in the following order. In the first section, I discuss how unofficial philosophers divided their world into two uneven halves – that of the philosophy done at official institutions and their own, the unofficial, with only their own being intellectually legitimate. To present their pursuits as meaningful, however, they needed to articulate what it was that made it outstanding and hence legitimate in the intellectual world, which demonstratively has no place for mediocrity. As I argue in the second section, they turned philosophy into a moral science of authenticity, combining symbols that drew on deep narratives of the history of philosophy as well as the history of the Czech nation. Philosophy became an expression of authenticity – an authenticity that can only be in conflict with political power. However, as I will argue further, these boundaries once established were occasionally crossed by unofficial philosophers themselves. The final section then deals with the example of Petr Rezek, an intellectual who became the unofficial philosophy's loyal opposition, and, reinforcing the argument of philosophy as a science of authenticity, was delegitimised in moral rather than professional terms.

Only the Worthy Philosophers: Articulating the Official/Unofficial Split

The fundamental defining feature of unofficial philosophy discourse was its qualitative distinction from the production of the actors employed by official institutions. This principally divided the field of Czechoslovak philosophy into two sectors – that of true, quality production, and that of professionalised mediocrity. Importantly, this distinction symbolically precluded the emergence of solidarity between official and unofficial spheres, based, for example, on the idea of a common pursuit. An early, moderate form of such boundary-work can be read in a letter written in 1970 by a 24-year-old theologian Ivan Štampach, addressed to the Radio Free Europe, The Voice of America, the British Broadcasting Corporation, and Anthony Bloom, an English Bishop, which

was confiscated by the secret police. The letter offers a comprehensive snapshot of the early post-1968 discourse:

The most characteristic symptom of current Czechoslovak philosophy is its polarisation into a stream that seeks to formulate official ideology, concentrated around official Party authorities, and a stream, which despite pressure, strives to pursue philosophy in freedom. Among the free-thinking philosophers, there are many Marxists. These Marxist philosophers are, however, so differentiated that it is hard to talk about any unified trend: There are groups that tend to logical empiricism (Tondl, Mleziva, Materna etc.), groups tending to existentialism (Machovec, Kosík) and those who seek synthesis (Macháček, Tošenovský, Zb. Fišer, etc.) Besides these Marxist philosophers, who are tolerated for their etiquette, there are philosophers of non-Marxist veins, vegetating in seclusion. The phenomenologist Jan Patočka enjoys great respect. Thomist philosophers are actively working on the pages of the church press, e.g. the VIA journal. Among other Christian philosophers, the one noteworthy is Dr L. Hejdánek who seeks a synthesis of Marx's philosophical discoveries and philosophical reflection of the Christian faith. (...) Perhaps it would be worth to somehow help these free-thinking philosophers, whose contact with [their colleagues] abroad is deteriorating. (KR-749386 MV)

Right from the start, the author drew a binary: there were two kinds of philosophy in Czechoslovakia. What distinguished them from each other was 'freedom', the symbol of both intellectual and moral purity, as opposed to cooperation with 'official Party authorities', which had a symbolically polluting effect. Clearly, there were moral forces at play and the philosophers who cooperated with or served the new post-1968 establishment were, by implication, considered 'unfree' in their thinking. It is important to note that this relatively early distinction was not based on intellectual affiliation with a particular tradition or an institutional position but rather on the approval or disapproval of the new political course of the country. Therefore, some Marxists who disagreed with the normalisation project were included among the 'free-thinking' philosophers.

Nonetheless, the text does contain an innuendo towards Marxism as such. When the author writes about 'free-thinking' Marxist philosophers, he notes their 'etiquette', which makes them tolerable to the otherwise polluting power of the political regime. The 'etiquette' here denotes their formal willingness to present themselves as actors working generally within the Marxist symbolic framework mandated by the regime. As Štampach implies, this was a necessary display of courtesy and politeness towards the

regime, done to appease the authorities enough to be allowed to keep an academic job. The ‘free-thinking’ Marxists were, therefore, relegated to a morally ambiguous position. Yes, they were on the right side, as they did not provide symbolic legitimization to the new establishment. Nonetheless, being Marxists, in the eyes of the author they were still making a compromise with the regime.

As the normalisation of the academic sphere progressed, however, even the ‘free-thinking’ Marxists who were tolerated for their ‘etiquette’ following the 1968 invasion were mostly retired or removed (except for Miroslav Mleziva¹⁸). Among the members of the emerging non-conformist network, the process of purges – which between 1970 and 1972 cleared Charles University’s Faculty of Philosophy of 55 people, exceeding the number dismissed after the 1948 coup – was seen as a devastation of the nation’s intellectual capital. As one of my interviewees, an official student at the end of the 1970s, noted, universities were seen as polluted zones, coded among the non-conformists as institutions that could not offer what they regarded as real education:

It was missing all that normal learning is supposed to have. It was missing the contact with the global scene, informational as well as interpersonal. There were no foreigners except for the Russians. No materials. The barriers were horrifying. Even the teachers were already products of the [socialist] system. Generally, it was worse in the humanities and better in the natural sciences, they were less contaminated by the ideology. (interview 2)

Another interviewee, similarly, recalls how philosophy supposedly ceased to exist at the Faculty during the 1970s:

They were getting rid of anybody who didn’t identify with the invasion of the Soviet troops. Philosophy was disappearing from the Faculty of Philosophy. What was left were small frightened enclaves. (...) In the end, nearly everybody had to leave, and philosophy became almost a taboo. (interview 4)

In other words, the field of institutionalised philosophy in Prague was seen as an intellectually as well as morally flawed space. As the police recorded a removed philosopher remarking in 1970, there was ‘about one decent person left’ in the

¹⁸ Miroslav Mleziva (1929-1990) – Czech philosopher who specialised in dialectical materialism and formal logic.

philosophy department of Charles University – and even about them, he has ‘heard horrible things’ (KR-838719 MV).

As Ladislav Hejdánek wrote to the JHEF in a report on the work of his seminar in 1984, ‘everything was gradually destroyed after 1968, although it took years. Since then, philosophy is struggling in our country, it is dying really...’ (Hejdánek, JHEF document 1984). In a 1982 article in *Studie* he further elaborated this position:

What currently survives at philosophical departments and scientific institutions is not only not philosophy in its depth, but not even Marxist philosophy, just vulgarized so-called Marxism in its most primitive, dogmatic version. In this whole country, there is not one institutionalised possibility to study the true state of philosophy (...). The societal situation here is, in my opinion, dangerously close to something that we could call a ‘conspiracy of the incompetent’. (Hejdánek, 1982: 280)

Having designated the institutional sphere as a symbolically polluted space, a space of immoral collaboration with the regime fit only to those who themselves lacked both decency and competence, the actors of the non-conformist network outlined the principles of the meaning of their own, contrarian practice. Unofficial philosophy, including its Marxist vein, was recast as the actual, true Czechoslovak philosophy.

Unofficial philosophers understood themselves as the figures securing the continuity of the Czech intellectual tradition. Unlike the employees of official institutions, whom they recast as producing mere attempts at philosophy, they saw themselves as, in fact, producing actual knowledge. They were a part of the national tradition, but also linked to the global philosophical discourse, a fact that was validated with each visit by a Western philosopher, arranged through supporting organisations such as the JHEF. At the same time, unofficial philosophers themselves confirmed their belonging to the global community of philosophers in their samizdat scholarly journals. As Václav Benda wrote in *Paraf* in 1985, ‘the Czech and Slovak philosophy had experienced a kind of rejuvenation, seldom seen in the past, and a one that is, with all modesty, likely relevant also beyond our local circumstances’ (Benda, 1985: 3).

A remarkable example of this binary distinction between official and unofficial or spurious and genuine is a series of six lengthy articles entitled *Philosophy or philozophy?* [Filosofie, nebo filozofie?] published by an anonymous author ‘pf’ over the

course of the years 1985 and 1986 in the review/polemic section of *Critical Review*. Here, the moral opposition between unofficial philosophy and official structures translated into linguistic *différance* between the classical spelling of the Czech term for philosophy, ‘filosofie’, and the emerging modern spelling ‘filozofie’. Specifically, the author gainsaid the effort of a particular Party committee to codify the latter spelling as correct. According to ‘pf’, this effort was driven by the socialist ambition for ‘progress’ and ‘democratization’ (pf 1985: 79) of language, against the traditional spelling, which the author associated with elite classical education (pf, 1986: 114). In the author’s complex analysis, the orthography of ‘philosophy’ became an exemplary battlefield. The uneven conflict that unfolded on this battlefield was one between an authentic society, represented by its organic intellectual elites, and the socialist regime’s flawed social engineering, driven by its endless ambition to make cultural production accessible to the imagined proletarian masses. Necessarily, according to the author, the result is a devaluation of high cultural forms.

The expectation of unofficial philosophers was that their intellectual contributions would be recognised and generally appreciated by the future generations despite their currently marginal status. As an anonymous writer (signed XYZ) wrote in *Studie*:

When the system, once transformed, will make a space for philosophy, it will be, besides the old [pre-Communist] (...) tradition, exactly this unofficial reservoir [of philosophy] of these normalisation years that the new generation of thinkers will draw on. (XYZ, 1978: 22).

According to one of my interviewees, ‘this kind of national awakening ethos was very common’ (interview 8). It was a belief that unofficial philosophy (as well as other genres of knowledge produced among non-conformist actors) was an undercurrent that would, eventually, rejuvenate Czech¹⁹ culture. In the interpretation of Julius Tomin, written in 1978 for *Studie*, this ethos of rejuvenation acquired a clearly social-therapeutic character. Moreover, his criticism was not only directed at the socialist project but also at Western consumerism:

The trend of socialist society, which is becoming oriented more and more to the production of artificial material needs, seriously endangers the most elementary thoughts, intentions and possibilities of socialism. If there is a chance to counter the trend, then it is only in the fullest

¹⁹ There was very little concern for the Slovak part of Czechoslovakia, and Slovak national heritage, as only a very small minority of participants in the non-conformist network were ethnically Slovak.

development of creative intellectual practice, the development of intellectual appropriation of the world, for which the requirement *sine qua non* is freedom of thought, freedom of search, freedom of intellectual exchange. (Tomin, 1978: 70)

In sum, the participants in unofficial philosophy discourse had a clear sense of a symbolic boundary between themselves and those who participated in the official discourse and were employed in official institutions. This boundary was articulated in both moral and intellectual terms. While there was at least a theoretical (although often problematic) possibility of cooperation and solidarity between Marxists and non-Marxists in the unofficial sphere, there was no discursive footing for the emergence of solidarity across the official/unofficial boundary. In the symbolic world of unofficial philosophers, nothing linked them together. To the contrary, the philosophers at official institutions were, in the eyes of the unofficials, discredited as morally polluted producers of non-knowledge. What was happening can be seen as a clear example of ‘narrative inflation’, defined by Smith as the symbolic process in which polarisation between two symbolic opposites increases, with one side becoming more and more portentous, while the other is more and more despicable (Smith, 2012). In inflated narrative genres, small conflicts – such as disciplinary quarrels – expand suddenly to acquire civilizational and existential importance, and ‘transcendental themes relating to the need for salvation and redemption become increasingly significant’ (Smith, 2012: 22).

In this case, unofficial philosophy was represented as the only form of philosophy in Czechoslovakia and hence the only worthy partner for the philosophers participating in the global disciplinary dialogue. It also became the only philosophy that would ever be relevant if authoritarian socialism would ever end. By precluding marginalised philosophers from working in their chosen field, the establishment was presented as committing a crime against cultural production and the Czechoslovak society in general – a looming tragedy. Rather than a struggle driven by a disciplinary dispute or a conflict over some position, which are usually the centre point of academic studies of intellectuals (Morgan and Baert, 2015), this case brings to the fore the moral aspect of intellectual argument. Symbolic unity in the demonstratively intellectual pursuit of philosophy emerged through the recognition of shared social and political positions, defined against official academics.

The Science of Authenticity: The Symbolic Premise of Charismatic Performance

By casting themselves as producers of real philosophy, as opposed to the actors affiliated with official institutions, Czechoslovak unofficial philosophers encountered a significant problem. Their claim was questionable, to put it mildly, as many of them had little formal education in philosophy and no experience with any regular academic system or the teaching process. While it seemed clear to most of them that the official philosophers could produce merely ‘vulgarized so-called Marxism’, which did not even qualify as a form of knowledge, the unofficial philosophers’ contribution was not obvious. Why were they better? As I will argue in this section, the solution to this conundrum was to draw on a combination of sources from phenomenology and theology to recast philosophy as a meditative, reflexive expression of the individual experience of non-conformist position vis-à-vis state or another imposing power. Importantly, to interpret philosophy as the expression of the inner self, the inner philosopher, was also to construe it as an almost transcendental inspiration, enhancing thus the charismatic appeal of those who performed it.

As I said, the discursive image of unofficial philosophy clearly expressed its academic ambition, and the ambition to be the only version of Czech philosophy that should be included in the global disciplinary discourse. Indeed, as Václav Benda wrote in his programmatic statement in the first issue of *Paraf*, the studies that the journal expected to publish ‘will be held to a certain academic standard, [and will have to] comply with the formal requirements normally expected all around the world’ (Benda 1985: 7). This appeal to academic level was, however, an obligatory trope. Producing works in the standard academic style was often frowned upon. Václav Benda, in the same article, wrote that the typical examples of academic writing were mere ‘commentaries on particular stages in the history of philosophy (the more obscure the better, and, if possible, devoid of any meanings for contemporary life) which, even if most excellent in scholarly measures, do not nurture the love of wisdom’ (1985: 3).

Rather, what was construed as the hallmark of producing true philosophical knowledge was the existentially authentic position of the philosopher. ‘The love of wisdom’ was

demonstrated, in a circular fashion, by participation in the non-conformist framework. The topic of authenticity shines through very clearly in an anonymous review (signed 'id') of Václav Havel's prison letters²⁰, which exceeded the genre of confessional correspondence into philosophical (phenomenological and ethical) meditation. Here, the reviewer appreciated especially how Havel, a playwright, personally reinvented himself into a philosopher through his prison experience of a 'liminal situation' (id 1983: 44) in which he 'transcends the realm of givenness to ask questions such as "why?" and "for what?"' (id). His letters were 'meditations, by which a person of deep thoughtfulness, true morality, and responsibility seeks to reach from the "walled island" (literally and indeed also metaphorically) to the things meta-physical' (id 1983: 47). The reviewer finally stated the thesis of authenticity explicitly and wrote that 'Havel's true and original (genuine) philosophising stems from the essence of his authentic existence and it has to be appreciated as such' (id 1983: 53). Comparing Havel to Boethius²¹, the reviewer wrote that '[consolation during incarceration] is one of the fates of philosophy that Václav Havel existentially experienced and, as [is] clear in his letters, he took upon himself as his cross' (ibid.). In other words, Havel's struggle and imprisonment made him extraordinarily perceptive to the problems of being. Suddenly, left only to himself in his prison cell like the Christian philosopher Boethius, he discovered that the only thing that makes his experience meaningful is philosophy, and that, actually, he has been a philosopher all along. Like Jesus' cross, however, philosophy was a burden that, from now on, Havel was to bear.

Philosophy, therefore, was interpreted as an existential necessity of reflection rather than academic practice. It did not grow out of mere interest, but it was sparked by inspiration. As Zdeněk Neubauer wrote, echoing Socrates from Plato's *Theaetetus*, the nature of this inspiration was 'wonder²² over an ordinary experience (...), over its order' (Neubauer 1980: 327). Philosophy, therefore, was seen as coming to the actor rather

²⁰ Letters written by Václav Havel between February 1980 and October 1981 in prison Heřmanice and Plzeň-Bory, originally entitled *Heřmanické listy* [Letters from Heřmanice], and later famously published as *Listy Olze* [Letters to Olga]. The letters were written to a discussion circle of unofficial philosophers *Kampademie*, which included Daniel Kroupa, Radim and Martin Palouš, Zdeněk Neubauer, Tomáš Halík, Pavel Bratinka, and Havel's brother Ivan.

²¹ A Roman Christian philosopher (480-524) who wrote his famous treatise *De consolazione philosophiae* [The Consolation of Philosophy] in prison before his execution.

²² It should be noted that Czech word for wonder, 'údiv', similarly to its English counterpart reflects the double meaning of surprise ('údiv') and miracle ('div').

than being conjured up or ratiocinated. It spoke through the actor who was enlightened by a specific, experienced constellation of the reality. With such conception of philosophical erudition holding a prominent position in the discourse (and being disseminated by the key figures of the network), one can see how the ability to perform philosophy in the unofficial scene could be perceived as a feat not far from Weber's original understanding of charisma, the 'gift of grace' (Weber, 1968: 52). This existentially-rooted interpretation of philosophy underpinned the charismatic appeal of individual performances in which actors in unofficial seminars and lectures demonstrated their own giftedness with this ability of insight into the true nature of being.

An important component of the authenticity discourse, which further brought the question of intellectual production closer to the individual, was the focus on the biographical nature of writing in reviewing philosophy. To prove the authenticity of the authors' philosophical revelation, reviewers often highlighted their life experience. Returning to the case above, in the review of Havel's letter, the reviewer, for example, emphasised that 'the movement of thought back and forth; its malleability as well as ossification, has one unifying centre. It is the persona of the writer, a man in a liminal situation...' (id, 1983: 44). Even more specific case is to be found in a review written by Václav Havel himself, in which he discussed an upcoming manuscript of the philosopher Josef Šafařík²³. Havel noted that the author

is not a professional philosopher in the conventional sense: he did not study philosophy (he is an engineer), never lectured on philosophy at any university, and was never employed by any philosophical institute (...). He is the truest and perhaps the most important outsider, not just because of the unfavourable external circumstances (in this sense the whole of Czech philosophy is an outsider) but in much more substantial sense: his outsidership is the result of a deeply experienced choice, the result of the essence of Šafařík's philosophising. (Havel, 1986: 105)

The belief that if philosophy was to be produced – and understood – it was necessary to know the fundamental biographical details, is clear here. It is not surprising that these crucial details were usually those confirming a lifelong distance from the polluted institutions of the socialist state. This distance became the crucial qualifying trait of an unofficial philosopher. Indeed, such a focus on the biographical explanation of the

²³ Josef Šafařík (1907-1992) – Czech philosopher and engineer.

structure of symbolic products, e.g. an emphasis on natural talent, is usual in biographies of artists (Kris and Kurz, 1981). Seldom, however, is it featured so prominently in evaluation of academic works. Finally, one interesting case of such biographical emphasis is an anonymous review of Rosemary Lévy Zumwalt's 1988 book *The Enigma of Arnold van Gennep*²⁴, which the author considered 'worthy of praise because it shows how the excommunication of Arnold van Gennep... turned against society itself. We will need to return to some of his works again' (-dmzl-, 1988: 43). Here, it is hard not to read into the review a wish of the reviewer that the works of Czechoslovak unofficial authors such as herself or himself would be similarly recognised in the future

The evidence of lifelong contrarianism and marginalisation were, however, not always available. Few participants in the non-conformist network of the 1970s and 80s could demonstrate as extended a strenuous relationship with the regime as Havel who, born into the top echelon of pre-socialist society, experienced marginalisation during the 1950s and 60s, and, as a civil rights activist, was imprisoned in the 1970s and 80s. Quite a few were disillusioned former researchers who used to be members of the Communist Party and were expelled or left only after the Warsaw Pact invasion. This had to be reflected in the reviews as well – and often critically. An example of this kind of review is this brief text written by an anonymous author, signed V.B., in *Paraf*. The review expressed general appreciation for a samizdat book by Rudolf Starý, but also noted that:

The evaluation cannot circumvent a psychological anamnesis of the author, because it is so conspicuous – in both positive and negative ways – on almost every page. Originally educated and employed as a Marxist philosopher, he seems to have radically broken up with both the theory and practice (of “real” socialism) (...). With convert's fervour, he “squares up” with his former faith: often astutely, sometimes superficially, but in his excursions against totalitarianism there is always certain awkwardness. (V.B., 1985: 111)

The author's apparent ambiguity, the morally unclear mixture of his Marxist past and non-conformist present, was clearly the source of thinly veiled contempt on the side of the reviewer, for whom such change of 'faith' raised suspicion. The author of the book was an ambiguous figure who did not fit the clear official/unofficial distinction. To cope with this perceived lack of moral consistency in the author's biography, the reviewer

²⁴ Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) – French anthropologist.

relied on the disambiguating effect of symbolic pollution, which often ensures ‘that the order in external physical events conforms to the structure of ideas’ (Douglas, 1979: 111), reducing thus the dissonance caused by ambiguity. In this case, the ‘external physical events’ was the actual life of the author. Indeed, ambiguity was dangerous – in the ever-anxious world of the non-conformist network, how was one to trust somebody who had so keenly switched sides? Therefore, while the reviewer was courteous enough to generally praise the book, which was published by Václav Havel’s samizdat edition *Expedice* [The Expedition], they made sure to highlight the chequered past of the author. The frown is palpable when the reader of the review realises that while noting that the author published the book anonymously, the reviewer revealed his real name.

The link between philosophical knowledge and existential authenticity was occasionally reflected in the praise of non-orthodox and accessible writing styles. This was a thrust towards a populist understanding of philosophy, devoid of academic scholasticism and speaking both from and to experience. Praising two philosophical dialogues published in samizdat, *Dialog o páté cestě* [A Dialogue on the Fifth Way] and *Dialog o mínění* [A Dialogue on Judgment] (both 1985), written by a pseudonymous philosophical duo Sidonius and Sakateka²⁵, an anonymous reviewer M. P., notes that:

A professional philosopher might judge the dialogues (...) harshly. They are written with (...) elegance and playful levity but they are not philosophical works. (...) I do not want to disregard these points and at the same time (...) I would like to argue: if we accept that the role of philosophy is to contribute to the quest for paths from the current crisis, that it should seek (...) the structures of the natural world and unearth [these structures] from the age-old layers that have been thrown on them by modern thought in its lowest, ideological form, then the joyful and merry philosophising of S+S constitutes an original creative act! (M.P., 1985: 106)

Lack of accessibility or dry academic style was, on the other hand, a reason for criticism. As an anonymous reviewer V. B. wrote in *Paraf* about a book by a Czech philosopher and sociologist Václav Bělohradský, who emigrated in 1970 and established himself as an academic in Italy:

It seems that the author somewhat succumbed to the pressure of modern impersonality – which he analyses otherwise astutely, and what more, holds up a critical mirror to it – in that he accepted the criteria, how “the only true” and “scientific” work should look like, and how much

²⁵ Ivan M. Havel and Zdeněk Neubauer

of living reality it has to sacrifice to systematicity and serious conceptual architecture. (V.B., 1985: 106)

Understood in this transcendental yet personalised manner, philosophy acquired a distinctly moral and ethical purpose. While official philosophers produced merely ‘commentaries’, the unofficials presented their philosophy as a mission towards a greater good. In the previous chapter, I discussed how Jan Patočka presented philosophy as a form of inner action, a form of knowledge that can provide some sort of therapy for actors who are in the uncertain situation of the non-conformist network in an authoritarian state. The generation of unofficial philosophers following Jan Patočka, however, took this concept of philosophy one step further, and, drawing on tropes from ancient Greek philosophy and German phenomenology, recast their role as truth-tellers who, by revealing the real nature of things and Being, shook the foundations of the system. For intellectuals who were stranded and persecuted inside the socialist state, philosophy became a form of salvation:

To be saved, we first have to mobilise all human powers – as per the old anecdote, we need to at least buy the ticket if we are begging God to win the lottery. Historical experience teaches us that philosophy is among the least spectacular of these powers, but by far not among the least effective. (Benda, 1985: 8)

To return to charisma, this conjuration of a utopian future and salvation is something that substantiates charismatic appeal (Couch, 1989). In the case of unofficial philosophers, the vehicle of this salvation was the truth, the experience of reality’s essence reached through philosophical meditation. As Daniel Kroupa wrote in his analysis of Jan Patočka’s oeuvre published in *Studie*,

There is truth speaking in every philosophical concept, impossible to be appropriated and specified because it itself is specifying. Truth is speaking even where it was supposed to be suppressed, subjected, and where it was supposed to become instrumentalized by the establishment, the power (...). The power, which presents itself as sovereign and independent and which reigns only thanks to the illusion of its sovereignty and independence, is irritated to insanity, it needs to destroy and kill and thus it denies its own independence, displays its own powerlessness before the truth, and unwittingly makes it glow. (Kroupa, 1980: 94-95)

Another confirmation of such perception of unofficial philosophers can be found in a 1980 secret police report from the questioning of one of Hejránek’s students. The student

stated that he deeply respects the level of [Hejdánek's] lectures and expressed a pity that they were visited by so few people. These lectures are purely philosophical, without any theological aspects. HEJDÁNEK prepares them regularly between meetings, so [the student] cannot himself estimate their concrete extent. The basic philosophical thought that he began to put forward is: "it is not the man who searches for and discovers the truth but the truth that finds and discovers the man." (KR-830053 MV)

Here, again, it is clear how the meaning of unofficial philosophy could underpin charismatic performances of the actors who produced it. Like Weber's charismatic leaders, they cast themselves as genuine actors entrusted with a moral mission. As Lloyd argues, this search for truth is one of the constitutive charismatic tropes in history of philosophy, beginning with Socrates, who against the 'greasy' appeal of the Sophists and their spiels posed his charismatic search for the truth that reaches beyond social consensus and adroit argumentation (Lloyd, 2018: 116). In the dramatic inflation of the narrative of Czechoslovak history, the unofficial philosophers cast their mission as the rejuvenation (if not redemption) of Czechoslovak philosophy and, eventually, Czechoslovak society. The truth would come to light through continuous reflection and in their performances. The glimpse of truth they gave their audiences would be the first step on the path to a new world.

Indeed, sociologists for a long time noted that truth is a powerful trope among intellectuals. As Bourdieu noted, 'although truth has no intrinsic force, there is an intrinsic force of belief in truth, of belief which produces the appearance of truth' (Bourdieu, 1990: 26). What usually remains hidden, however, is that truth is not merely an empty signifier, a rhetorical strategy used to legitimise particular practice or power constellation. Among unofficial philosophers, the protean symbol of truth combined specific meanings tied especially to intellectual traditions of Platonism and phenomenology. It was a power existing independently of individuals to whom it was occasionally revealed through reflection, experience, or a sudden awakening. This meaning is clearly reflected in Havel's iconic essay *The Power of the Powerless* (Havel, 2018). Here, the author famously demonstrated the logic of power in Czechoslovak socialism on the example of a greengrocer who participates in the reproduction of the political system by putting celebratory placards on the front of the shop he works in. At one point, however, the greengrocer decides that he would not participate in the political

farce anymore and stops displaying the placards, ‘begins to say what really thinks at political meetings’ and expresses ‘solidarity with those whom his conscience commands him to support’ (Havel, 2018: 367). Importantly, Havel never says why did his greengrocer change his attitude. He merely writes that ‘something in our greengrocer snaps’ and ‘he steps out of living within the lie’ to ‘attempt to live within the truth’ (Havel, 2018: 367). In other words, the truth revealed itself to the greengrocer without warning, and the glance of this truth obliged him to change the course of his life. This perspective is congruent with Martin Heidegger’s interpretation of truth as ‘unconcealedness’ in his work *On the Essence of Truth* (Heidegger, [1943] 1997). It is worth noting that this work was the main topic of a private seminar organised already in the 1940s by Jan Patočka, to whom Havel dedicated his essay.

Most importantly, however, to rely on truth as a symbol in the Czech and Czechoslovak context has wide implications in terms of the national narrative and references a particular intellectual tradition. In Czech culture, the concept of truth is powerfully connected to several iconic intellectual figures regarded as central in Czech history. The most important is Jan Hus, a pre-Protestant medieval preacher inspired by John Wycliffe who served as Rector of Charles University from 1409 to 1410. Hus criticized the debauchery of the Catholic church and was executed for blasphemy at the council of Constance in 1415. In a letter to his colleague at Charles University named Jan Kardinál, which Hus had written from a Constance prison, he stated a dictum that ‘truth conquers all things (“*super omnia vincit veritas*”)’ (Haberkern, 2016: 53), which echoed the truth that prevails forever and ever of the apocryphal first book of Ezra. Hus’ followers, the militarist Hussite movement which, defying five papal crusades, reigned Bohemia for two decades after his death, condensed the phrase into the motto *pravda vítězí* [Truth prevails]. This idea of prevailing truth has been a long-standing trope in Czech thought and art ever since, referencing the concept of contrarianism in the name of moral commitment and spiritual superiority against physical or military power. Importantly, the motto was taken up by the founder of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk²⁶ who placed it on the Czech presidential banner, where it remains to this day. Václav Havel, the former dissident turned president, explicitly referred to this motto

²⁶ Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937) – Czech philosopher and sociologist, professor of philosophy at Charles University and King’s College London, later the first president of Czechoslovakia.

with his famous statement that ‘truth and love conquer lies and hatred’ (Holy, 1996: 40).

The meaning of truth as a concept was, therefore, complex. It was associated with the mythologized contrarian tradition in Czech culture – intellectuals such as Jan Hus, Jan Amos Komenský²⁷, Karel Havlíček Borovský²⁸, and Tomáš Masaryk who always struggled against the infinitely more powerful establishment, be it the Catholic church, the Germans, or the Hapsburgs (and usually some combination of these three). The truth further referred, through Masaryk and his presidential banner, to the era of non-Communist past, the wealth and democracy of the idealised interwar Czechoslovak Republic, which was criticised by the official historiography as a bourgeois regime. Indeed, the figure of Masaryk was important as such. It was significant that he was a philosophy professor at Charles University and later at University College London, that he wrote his dissertation on the soul in Plato’s dialogues, and that as young academic, he mentored Edmund Husserl – the founder of phenomenology. His life and oeuvre were much discussed among the actors involved in unofficial philosophy – as the founder of the perceived golden-era of Czechoslovak democracy, he was the ultimate philosopher-king.

In the discourse of unofficial philosophy, the position of authenticity and truth-telling had also another, more important avatar. The figure who embodied the discourse was Jan Patočka, who has, after his death in the position of the Charter 77 spokesperson, ‘attained a semi-saintly status in Czech philosophy’ (Tucker, 1996: 199). This position was the result of several factors. First, there was his existing charismatic aristocracy, mentioned in the previous chapter, which comprised the most influential unofficial philosophers. Second, there were his performances in speech and writing, in which he effectively mobilised the symbol of truth, lending it to the dissident discourse. Finally, there was his death, which came just two months after the Charter 77 was published, ten days after long police interrogation, affording thus an interpretation in which Patočka was effectively murdered by the police. Post mortem, Patočka, who himself analysed the role of sacrifice in society, was reinterpreted by his charismatic aristocracy as the

²⁷ Jan Amos Komenský (1592-1670) – Czech philosopher and educator.

²⁸ Karel Havlíček Borovský (1821-1856) – Czech public intellectual and journalist of the national awakening era.

Czech counterpart of the original truth-teller in the history of philosophy, Socrates (Szakolczai, 2005). Eventually, he became a synecdoche of unofficial Czech philosophy. In Hejdánek's words,

he embodied the fate of Czech philosophy (...). He was banished from university and could not lecture for almost 20 years. Only then [after 1968], he could return to the Faculty as a professor, but after a few years, he had to leave forever. The fates of other philosophers, who were unwilling to conform, were more or less the same (Hejdánek, 1982: 280).

His inflated importance for the network is even more apparent in an anonymous *Paraf* article chastising the official philosophy and emphasising the qualities of the unofficials' own pursuits:

At this moment (...) we can measure the importance of Patočka's activity. Nothing of the above mentioned applies to Czech (unofficial) philosophy. Here, you would not encounter the lack of young adepts (...), neither pseudo-education which is almost common elsewhere. Primary literature reading is outstanding, and even the infamous gap *in puncto* in language education cannot be found, and fluency in classical Greek is not exceptional. What Mr Professor taught his students, that means to understand education as a reliable pillar of our continuity (especially when it comes to the state of destitution), is what they continue in a matter-of-course manner, and that is why they write today about the "Prague philosophers". (DN, 1987: 107)

Clearly, the argument of authenticity led to hubris. As Erazim Kohák²⁹, a Czech émigré philosopher and Boston University professor who actively participated in Czech unofficial discourse, wrote in his review of Radim Palouš' samizdat monograph *Čas výchovy* [The Era of Education]:

I believe that philosophy must be rejuvenated, since people cannot do without it, and current 'professional' philosophy does not meet the need. I am not at all persuaded that this rejuvenation will come from the people who enjoy "global" respect. I expect it from elsewhere, from the thinking, philosophising people who were put aside and this being aside, for example by unavailability of libraries, forced them to engage with philosophy on the level of experienced reality, of authenticity, in which good and evil, truth and lie, love and hate all have their clear meaning. While "world-class" philosophers proclaim the end of philosophy, (...) philosophy is being born anew [in Czechoslovakia]. (Kohák, 1986: 113)

Kohák, although writing from the USA, draws very clearly on the tropes that I identified as prominent in the autochthonous discourse of unofficial philosophy.

²⁹ Erazim Kohák (1933) – Czech émigré philosopher

Similarly to the previous interpretations, unofficial philosophers were here cast as the producers of true knowledge – a form of knowledge that can clearly distinguish between ‘good and evil, truth and lie, love and hate.’ They unveiled the Being for what it was. Rather than by formal education, they were qualified by their experience of marginalisation, which ‘forced them’ to engage with reality directly rather than through books. Kohák’s external position meant that his claims were not mitigated by modesty (and rather reinforced by his global connections), and, therefore, he could also make the claim of purity and importance one step further. In his interpretation, unofficial philosophers were not just the only true philosophers in Czechoslovakia, but also in the world. While their spoiled Western counterparts proclaimed philosophy dead, the Easterners, driven by existential authenticity, proved that it still had much to offer.

This association of noetic excellence with existential authenticity and peripheral position in the Czechoslovak society led to an exoneration of unofficial philosophers from any standard academic measures. This was clear already in Václav Benda’s program in *Paraf*, which although mentioning academic requirements, also noted that ‘unorthodoxy and a certain improvised character are among the constitutive aspects of unofficial philosophy’ (Benda, 1985: 6). Another unofficial philosopher, Jiří Michálek, was even more specific when he wrote that ‘philosophy is one but can be done differently in different places. It is hard to imagine that a local philosopher, a stoker, a watchman, a caretaker etc., could and should write books like an Oxford professor’ (1987: 128). Czech unofficial philosophers, in other words, could not (and ‘should not’) be held to the standards of academic philosophical production, since they were not in the position to fulfil them. Nonetheless, despite possible shortcomings, they remained a part of the global community. They belonged to it by their attitude and were entitled to its solidarity and respect.

Versions of this argument spread also to the Western supporters of unofficial philosophy who soon came to understand that to base their support on demonstrable quality alone was not viable. After all, the Jan Hus Educational Foundation supported not only philosophers but also historians and literary theorists, and only a few of its members spoke enough Czech to judge the quality of the works they received. As Roger Scruton, the philosopher and aesthetician who presided over the foundations since 1981, wrote in his notes on academic scholarships provided to Czech dissidents, ‘the only

indisputably publishable works are by [Petr] Pithart³⁰ and Fidelius [Karel Palek]³¹.’ Immediately, however, Scruton writes that ‘if we compare what our people accomplish with 15000£ a year or less with what the University of Bradford (say) achieves with a budget of millions, we should be proud, not of ourselves but of them’ (Roger Scruton, JHEF Letter, 1985). The situation of Czech and Slovak unofficial scholars, in other words, entailed a paradox. They were regarded, and regarded themselves, as true intellectuals, since they strove to produce academic output in extremely difficult conditions. Yet it was clear that they could not be held up to academic standards exactly due to these conditions.

It is perhaps fitting to conclude this section by noting that Erazim Kohák’s prophecy, in which he saw the production of unofficial philosophers becoming globally important, was never fulfilled. With the exception of Václav Havel (who participated but did not really identify as a philosopher) and perhaps Jan Patočka, none of the unofficial philosophers produced works that would truly resonate in the field of international philosophy. Nonetheless, throughout the 1980s, the belief persisted that the non-conformist network would beget great works and ideas which would eventually constitute true intellectual culture in Czechoslovakia. This belief was an important ingredient in the process of charisma construction of unofficial philosophers, endowing the actors with great self-confidence and their audiences with high expectations.

‘Now That I Think about It Again...’: Clear Boundary-Work, Blurred Boundaries

The boundary-work that unofficial philosophers undertook, and their discursive self-construction as producers of true philosophical knowledge, may suggest an absolute lack of overlap or even communication between the official and unofficial scenes. As David Sanders reported to the Jan Hus Educational Foundation in June 1989,

there could be a real problem, which we could perhaps do something about, concerning the mutual misunderstanding between the ‘unofficials’ and the ‘officials’. The ‘unofficials’, to

³⁰ Petr Pithart (1941) – Czech historian, Prime Minister from 1990 to 1992.

³¹ Karel Palek (1948) – Czech philosopher and linguist

generalise crudely, despise the ‘officials’ as cowards’ whereas the ‘officials’ regard the ‘unofficials’ as irrelevant. (David Sanders, JHEF Report, 1989)

Interestingly, the report, written from an outsider perspective, finds less difference between the two camps than they both likely would. Sanders notes that ‘they are largely after the same things and speak the same language’. Perhaps exactly because they were ‘after the same things’ and spoke ‘the same language’ (David Sanders, JHEF Report, 1989), it would be too convenient to see the boundaries constructed by unofficial philosophers as translating unproblematically into the world of mundane social intercourse. In the actual life of the non-conformist network, the boundaries between polluted and pure spheres were occasionally crossed. While boundary-crossing was not widespread throughout the non-conformist network, there were several actors who were able to navigate both worlds.

In fact, the cited 1989 document itself does mention a case in which the distinction between official and unofficial scenes was not so clear, and that, for some, the boundary was permeable:

The sole person who moved with equal ease between official and unofficial circles was Jozef Moural³², whom I met at Hejdánek’s flat and at the official engagements. He is 99.9% certain to get an award to come to Oxford for 6 months next academic year, and we should exploit him and his advice. Much respected by both sides. (David Sanders JHEF, Report 1989)

Moural was a young philosopher who studied both in unofficial seminars and official institutions; on the unofficial side, he studied with Kroupa and Rezek, he frequented Hejdánek’s group, and he even convened his own seminar. Clearly, he maintained contact with both worlds, and, despite participating in events organised by the official institutions, effectively worked with some of the most diehard unofficial philosophers. According to one of my interviewees, Moural was even selected by Hejdánek to become his successor (interview 5). This never materialised, as they both moved on to the official sphere after 1989. Hejdánek became a lecturer and later professor at the Faculty of Protestant Theology and Moural received the award to go to Oxford, and later established himself in the field of Czech academic philosophy³³.

³² Correct name Josef Moural.

³³ The planned succession is less clear than the interviewee suggests, as several secret police files named also another potential candidate, the former Charter 77 spokesperson Jan Kozlík.

Another student, who graduated from Charles University's official philosophy course in 1977, already as a Charter 77 signatory, recalled a similar crossing of supposedly clear boundaries in an interview:

Nonetheless, I was there [at the Faculty of Philosophy] when the hard normalisation really began. Although... now that I think about it again, that's not really true. I had the [final] state exam with Milan Sobotka, there were also [Jiří] Pešek and [Jarmila] Pešková [present]. With Sobotka and Pešková and Pešek, I was at Patočka's last private seminar at his home. (...) So, there I was, at my state exam, and there were these people, my fellow students from Patočka's seminar, examining me. I didn't report them, they didn't report me, and I graduated. This took place at the time when I was already fired from my job and I worked as a stoker. (interview 12)

Here, it is clear that not only junior scholars but also more senior philosophers moved occasionally between the fields of official and unofficial philosophy (especially to come in contact with an outstandingly charismatic actor such as Patočka) and contributed to both. Milan Sobotka, the philosopher mentioned above, is also identified by another interviewee, who was a member of the group focused on political philosophy:

We had a visitor [from abroad] who was an expert on Hegel, so I invited a philosopher from Charles University, Milan Sobotka (...) to come to this unofficial seminar to discuss Hegel [with him]. And he came. Really, he came, he was brave, and I am thankful to this day for his bravery. There was some communication. (...) It wasn't a ghetto. But it also wasn't, as they tend to say today, some mutual negotiation. It was hostility, but with some communication. We knew they've read what we wrote. (interview 1)

This occasional contact between the scenes was, however, not merely a one-way street with officially employed philosophers sneaking to unofficial seminars. Sometimes, the unofficials were able to secretly participate in seminars organised at official institutions. For example, the philosopher mentioned above, Milan Sobotka, convened 'an official doctoral seminar in German classical philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy (...), attended, besides official students, also by some students from unofficial seminars' (interview 16). Another example of such overlap was the seminar of the mathematician Petr Vopěnka who worked at Charles University's Faculty of Mathematics and Physics. Between 1983 and 1987, Vopěnka organised an official seminar, approved by the university, that sought to explore the intersection of mathematics and philosophy, in which the philosophical aspect was provided by members of the network of unofficial philosophy: Stanislav Sousedík, Zdeněk Neubauer, Jiří Polívka, Radim Palouš, and Petr

Rezek. Interestingly, in this official seminar, Rezek presented his exposition of Husserl's objectivity, in which he thoroughly dissected the problem of kitsch from the phenomenological position and produced a conceptual framework for his criticism of Czech unofficial philosophy, which I discuss in the next section.

To summarise the discussion so far, although the boundary-work of unofficial philosophers produced a discourse which presented the field of Czechoslovak philosophy as clearly divided into two mutually hostile scenes (the pure unofficials and the polluted officials) the boundaries of the social world were more problematic. While in general the identities were relatively defined, and it was known who belonged to the official sphere and who did not, there were nonetheless actors, such as the abovementioned Josef Mural, who managed to participate in both worlds. Occasionally, the unofficial-official boundary was being crossed by both sides of this conflict. Drawn by the charisma of unofficial philosophers such as Patočka or the prestige of their international guests, those employed at official institutions sometimes disregarded possible repercussions and visited their seminars. At the same time, even those unofficial philosophers who were the strongest propagators of the existential authenticity, such as Neubauer or Palouš, were happy to boost their own prestige by accepting an invitation from an official place.

Boundaries, especially those created in difficult circumstances, are not definitive reflections of reality. In this case, they offered a general code, a morally imbued way to understand social reality produced by and for those who explored philosophy unofficially. These boundaries were constituted in the textual performances of unofficial philosophers, in which they presented themselves in particular light and according to particular scripts drawn, among other sources, from the history of philosophy, as Socratic philosophers, spearheaded symbolically by the Czech version of Socrates himself, Jan Patočka. As I have shown, the realm of social intercourse was less clear-cut. Nonetheless, the minimal permeability did not mitigate the potential of discourse to provide the parlance and categories for charisma as well as the symbolic base for solidarity.

A One-Man Counter-Discourse: Dealing with the Loyal Opposition in Unofficial Discourse

The Gasconade of unofficial philosophers who claimed existential authenticity had one significant adversary – Petr Rezek, the philosopher, psychologist and aesthete whom I presented in the earlier chapter as a convener of several seminars. As early as 1986, when he published the first two reviews of unofficial philosophy publications in the samizdat review *Střední Evropa* [Central Europe], Rezek became an outspoken and sharp critic of sentimentalism and lack of rigour among his peers. He wrote in a transgressive, even vitriolic style that was often deemed ‘unfair’, as one of my interviewees recalled (interview 5), and provoked angry responses and polemics on the pages of samizdat journals. Rezek’s intervention was understood as a major disturbance to the general bonhomie of unofficial philosophers, and the way in which his voice was rejected highlights again both the personalised and moral conceptions of philosophy prevalent among unofficial philosophers.

Let us have a closer look at how Rezek chastised other unofficial philosophers, and what their answers reveal about the system of meanings of unofficial philosophy. The first of his reviews was a critical analysis of the second issue of the samizdat philosophy journal *Paraf*, entitled eponymously ‘On the second issue of *Paraf*’, in which the author focused specifically on two articles written by Zdeněk Neubauer and Jaroslav Kříž. According to Rezek:

rather than philosophical texts, [the Editor] collected products of authors who are so infatuated with their perceived importance that they lack any control over their thinking and make rudimentary mistakes for which we can hardly find a ‘parallel’³⁴. We must feel pity, seeing people who are quite intelligent being so misled by their lack of objectivity that they, in fact, embarrass themselves with their attempts at philosophy. (-rzk-, 1986: 88).

Regarding the individual essays published in the journal, the author similarly did not shy away from delivering harsh blows. According to Rezek, Neubauer’s work was ‘composed of banalities and trite grandiloquence’ (-rzk-, 1986: 84) and had ‘hardly

³⁴ Here, Rezek ironically refers to the term ‘parallel philosophy’, coined by the journal editor Václav Benda to describe unofficial philosophy. The adjective parallel refers to Benda’s famous essay *The Parallel Polis*, in which the author argued for construction of a parallel structure of non-authoritarian institutions in authoritarian conditions, especially the educational system (Benda, 1991).

anything to do with thinking' (-rzk-, 1986: 85). Ironizing Neubauer's understanding of speculative philosophy as 'raising the claim for truth similar to the truth of the arts' (Neubauer, 1985: 17), Rezek mockingly noted that, unfortunately, 'the arts to which Neubauer's creation should be similar have not yet been invented' (-rzk-, 1986: 84). Jaroslav Kříž, the other criticised author, did not fare any better, and Rezek noted that he 'loves paradoxes, but especially in his own thoughts, which are merely unanalysed thoughts of others' (-rzk-, 1986: 85).

Rezek's criticism did not go unnoticed and a few months later *Paraf* published a response of its editor Václav Benda. The article, entitled 'On baleful pamphlets', defends both his outlet and the authors, and casts Rezek (referred to as 'nametag -rzk-') as an author motivated by personal spite against Zdeněk Neubauer. According to Benda, Rezek 'maintains an impersonal, objective detachment from all others, but with Neubauer, he would be willing to discuss the colour of his socks if he somehow thought that this might jeopardize [Neubauer's] philosophical reputation' (Benda, 1986: 88). And further, the editor writes 'the real problem is that -rzk- gave way to his temperament, personal malice and anxieties' (Benda, 1986: 90). Ultimately, Rezek himself was reinterpreted as the enemy of the dissidents: 'the approach of the nametag -rzk- is a priori incorrect in that it clearly sacrifices the cause (the Truth, philosophy, the civil society) to the interests (...) of his own person' (ibid.).

This episode reveals how the meaning of unofficial philosophy was controlled and purified in the limited samizdat discourse. Rezek raised his contrarian voice to the dissatisfaction of well-embedded members of the network, whose intellectual reputations – and indeed their charismatic appeal – were suddenly threatened by his criticism and embarrassed by his parodic tone. To engage in a fully-fledged debate would have been a risky enterprise, as Rezek seldom missed the opportunity to demonstrate that he was a better-learned intellectual than the objects of his criticism, identifying for example with apparent effortlessness the textbooks they used and correcting their Greek. Instead, Benda remained truthful to the personalised understanding of philosophy described above. His response focused on the motivations of the critic – personal anxieties of -rzk-, a 'mere nametag' in contrast to the 'generally respected Czech philosopher' Neubauer (Benda, 1986: 88). To symbolically pollute the critic as irrelevant, uncontrolled and even evil, he went further, noting how these

failures of character turned Rezek, in the end, into a person desecrating the central symbols (the Truth, philosophy, the civil society). By implication, the critic was portrayed as unwittingly serving the cause of the regime, not that of true philosophy, which, as I demonstrated, was understood as always counter-regime. He was recast as – an official philosopher. After *Paraf* published Rezek's response in the next issue, in which he stylised himself as a female³⁵, Benda closed the gate to the journal, stating that 'Paraf will publish polemic reactions on any topic, but not of any quality' (Benda 1987: 131).

Rezek, nevertheless, continued to publish reviews of unofficial philosophy in other outlets, mainly the *Critical Review* and *Central Europe*. Here, he maintained the sarcastic tone set in his earlier works, and, in his further critique of Neubauer, whom he saw as a symptomatic figure of unofficial philosophy, as someone who 'came to philosophical authors too late, already clearly developed (...), unable to give up his non-philosophical patterns of thinking' (-rzk-, 1987: 128). These reviews became likely an important undertaking to Rezek himself as, according to a letter written by Jessica Douglas-Homes to the JHEF chairman Roger Scruton in early 1987, 'his circle hardly exists, and he concentrates on writing criticisms in samizdat journals' (Jessica Douglas-Homes, Letter to RVS, 1987). Rezek continued his public criticism of Czech unofficial philosophers also after the 1989 revolution, as they swiftly (himself included) moved to official institutions, and moderating the laudations they received along the way for implanting the 'genre of unofficial seminars to the auditoriums of Charles university' (Rezek, 2011: 162). For Rezek, once a star of the unofficial world, 'unofficial seminars were 'a synonym for "amateurism"' (ibid.).

Rezek's solitary critical interventions in the discourse of Czech unofficial philosophy were a major disturbance. Even three to four decades later, the majority of my interviewees felt that it was important to take the initiative and raise the topic to make clear to me that Rezek was a 'quarrelsome figure who antagonised everyone' (interview 3), 'took it too far' (interview 14), or wrote reviews that were 'very, very, very hostile' (interview 5). His critical performances, however, can be read as another part of the

³⁵ Referencing Benda's original use of female pronouns when discussing the 'sign -rzk-', as 'sign' is a feminine noun in Czech.

discourse of ‘true philosophy’ and acts of boundary-work. He too was negotiating the exclusive position of his endeavour and policing the purity of philosophy as a sanctified form of cultural production. He sought to establish boundaries against both other unofficial philosophers, whom he saw as sloppy and sentimental, as well as the official institutionalised sphere, maintaining that ‘studying at our universities, unfortunately, does not guarantee an education’ (Rezek, 1987: 128).

The discussion here can be linked to the previous chapter, in which I explored the scripts enacted by unofficial philosophers. In his reviews, Rezek re-enacted the taskmaster script and pitted it against the sages such as Neubauer. His intention was not to attack them personally, although his interventions were indeed interpreted in this way. Rather, Rezek sought to uncover what he perceived as sloppiness and superficiality hidden behind the script of the sage. His reviews were attempts to purify philosophy from the religious subtexts which elevated the prophetic, sagely mode of performance that he saw as prone to emphasising esoteric wisdom over academic rigorousness. Rezek was a taskmaster through and through – for him, the sages got the intellectual scripts all wrong.

Importantly, the way in which other philosophers dealt with Rezek’s criticism, the only significant internecine conflict in unofficial philosophy, reinforces the argument of this chapter by highlighting once again the personalised conception of philosophy as existential expression and moral pursuit. Rezek put his addressees in an unenviable position – he was too big a fish in the unofficial philosophy pond to be ignored. More importantly, after more than a decade spent in the scene, he also knew exactly where the problems lay, and that is why he could strike effectively. But instead of trumping his arguments intellectually, Václav Benda and others who took up the role of unofficial philosophy’s defenders used this case to reinforce the dominant interpretation of unofficial philosophy as an expression of authenticity and moral pursuit. Rather than rendering Rezek irrelevant in intellectual exchange, they discredited his character and morals and portrayed him as driven by personal failure and malice rather than the dignified motivations that make one a true philosopher.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the fundamental aspects of the landscape of meaning upon which unofficial philosophy performances unfolded. I focused on the process of boundary-work among unofficial philosophers, i.e. the process by which they distinguished themselves from the officially employed academics, and the position they assumed in their own discourse vis-à-vis them. As I argued, the most important aspect of unofficial philosophy discourse was the understanding of philosophy as originating in existential authenticity of philosophers as dissidents or non-conformists in Czechoslovakia. This conception of authenticity was underpinned by sources in classical Greek philosophy and Heideggerian phenomenology, the interest in which was inspired by Jan Patočka, and Christianity, strong throughout the non-conformist network. Official philosophers, to the contrary, were cast as actors tainted by the polluting force of the regime, unable to experience this situation, and hence unable to produce true philosophy. On top of that, they were also presented as unqualified and incompetent, since the belief among the unofficials was that the socialist system would be unable to tolerate competent philosophers in its institutions. True philosophers speak the truth, and this would have been unacceptable to the regime. As one of my interviewees succinctly summarised the unofficial worldview: ‘it was us who had done the real work, all they’ve done was Marxism’ (interview 3).

However, not everything was so clear in social reality. Although positions were rather clearly defined and articulated in both professional and moral terms, unofficial philosophers and official philosophers did communicate and occasionally crossed the symbolic boundaries between their spaces. This is hardly surprising, as in complex societies (and complex situations) actors are driven in various directions and motivated by conflicting wishes or desires. But this does not mitigate the discursive effect and moral force of powerful symbols and boundaries, which, even if occasionally crossed, remain real in the realm of shared symbolic structures. Furthermore, I have noted that the discourse had an adversary, Petr Rezek, who, during the 1980s, wrote several harsh reviews of unofficial philosophy, in which he unpacked in detail the shortcomings of their authors. The addressees of his critique, however, rejected Rezek thanks exactly to

the personalised, moral understanding of philosophy, which allowed them to symbolically eject him from the discussion as an unworthy opponent.

The meaning attributed to philosophy – that of authenticity and purity – provided parlance and categories for philosophers to think and speak about themselves, and, through their performances, also to their audiences who then understood them as such. This meaning was calibrated to produce charismatic figures, because unofficial performances were seen as acts of exploring true philosophy, underpinned by the non-conformist attitude and lived experience, in a political system that was seen as a force actively dismantling the discipline and the society as such. Unofficial performances were conceived as an undercurrent that rejuvenated philosophy in the country and reinforced the morals of the society. In extreme interpretations, they were seen as having global importance and the potential to generate a new turn in the discipline. As one of my interviewees who attended several unofficial seminars throughout the 1980s summarised it, ‘we came to think that, in fact, we were the only true philosophers around’ (interview 5).

The case of unofficial philosophers shows important gaps in the pragmatic perspective on intellectuals, which is prevalent in the current academic research. Even Baert and Morgan (2015) who explicitly acknowledged the role of morality in intellectual debate, reduced it to a largely rhetorical device deployed for a more effective argument that seeks some form of instrumental profit. With unofficial philosophers, this narrative is unconvincing, since they actually could not hope to amass conventional gains. That does not mean that prestige or minor financial assistance from the West played no role in individual decisions. Yet, the articles quoted above were not read in the West – they were in Czech. What they did was locate philosophical talents in an individual and their relation vis-à-vis the official institutions and the socialist regime. This understanding provided a cohesive narrative that merged political, religious, and academic pursuits into a narrative of salvation from the oppressive regime, one that imbued individuals with moral commitments and tied them together.

CHAPTER 7: The Consolation of Philosophy: Performance, Solidarity, and Subjectivities among Non-Conformist Actors in Socialist Czechoslovakia

The previous chapter explored the landscape of meanings of unofficial philosophy in Czechoslovakia. As I argued, seeking to distinguish themselves from their counterparts at official institutions, unofficial philosophers deployed the process of boundary-work to morally pollute the officials by emphasising their compliance with the regime. To further substantiate their claim at being the ‘only true’ philosophers in Czechoslovakia, they developed a version of authenticity discourse, which reinforced the charismatic dimension of performances. They recast themselves as producers of philosophy as it, supposedly, has originally been meant – an expression of deep reflection and an intellectual path towards the truth. In contrast, official academics were, in this unofficial discourse, relegated to the zone of non-scientific knowledge, which could claim neither moral nor intellectual legitimacy.

In this final empirical chapter, I explore the effects that performances of unofficial philosophers had on their audiences. I argue that charismatic performances of intellectuals were important interventions that maintained the non-conformist network that was constantly destabilised by interventions of the police and social delegitimization. In a way, therefore, this chapter returns to Durkheim’s late work ([1912] 1995), in which he offered a pioneering account of ritual as a moment of ‘moral remaking’ (Durkheim, [1912] 1995: 386) that recreates the unity of the group and imbues individuals with ‘energy and enthusiasm’ (ibid.). Intellectual performances of unofficial philosophy had a similar effect in that they offered a complex of symbolic and social resources that inspired a sense of meaningfulness in participation in the unofficial network and helped actors to find and articulate their place in the world of late socialism.

In complex modern societies, such as Czechoslovakia of the 1970s and 80s, and in particular among intellectuals (or aspiring intellectuals), we rarely observe ritual effects akin in intensity to the Durkheimian collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1995: 217–

218), in which social norms momentarily disintegrate in a sudden outburst of emotions. The codes of behaviour and presentation are usually rather strict. Yet despite that, performances delivered in the form of lectures or seminars do have the capacity to unite and enhance a sense of togetherness and belonging to a particular community through the shared experience of focus towards symbols and actors who communicates them. To participate in such performances is an experience that signals to the actors present in the audience that they are not alone in their fascination with the charismatic figure and that their affection is justified. It bears repeating here how important it was for Patočka's students to see others, especially senior academics, sharing their adulation of the teacher. I will explore this phenomenon in the first section of this chapter, which discusses the spaces of solidarity.

The realm of social intercourse intersects with the level of symbols and their impact on the subjectivity of the audience members. People do not merely converge over the shared judgment of symbolic production (Wohl, 2015). Successful performers are able to persuade their audiences about their arguments. They can produce convergence. This ability is indeed intensified among those who are seen as charismatic actors. Their followers perceive them as 'performing the ideas [he or she] communicates' (Lloyd, 2018: 15). Charismatic actors achieve a transformation of others' outlook on the world, inspire them to take up new commitments (occasionally moral commitments) and sometimes even spur them to action. In Foucauldian parlance, performances shape subjectivities (Foucault, 2017), new conceptions of the self and of what self should be; new relations to the principal categories of morality – in the words of Erazim Kohák from the previous chapter, 'good and evil, truth and lie, love and hate' (Kohák 1986: 113). I discuss the emergence of new subjectivities, influenced by performances of unofficial philosophers, in the eponymous section of this chapter.

I use the word subjectivity rather than identity because what I refer to is one's relation to himself or herself. Indeed, non-conformists defined themselves in terms of their counter-State position. Participation in the non-conformist network endowed individuals with a sense of identity, or rather identification, which, as per Brubaker and Cooper (2000), can be seen as the ability 'to characterize oneself, to locate oneself vis-à-vis known others, to situate oneself in a narrative' (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 14). However, what my interviewees talked about, and what I saw in the police files, runs

deeper. Czech dissent was not a homogeneous sphere, as it may seem in hindsight, and the network, while interlinked on many levels, was composed of people who would never truly identify with one position due to marked ideological, religious, and political differences. Rather than mere identification with some group, there was a gradual transformation of self-understanding and understanding one's place within the political system and the world in general. What united unofficial seminar participants was that they understood themselves as counter-regime actors with different goals and vistas of future society, and they began acting as such. This was the emancipatory effect of charismatic performances which, as Lloyd notes, is not only a feat of despotic religious leaders. Charisma 'can be emancipatory' (Lloyd, 2018: 24) because it 'challenges the powers that be' (Lloyd, 2018: 6).

This personal level of relation to a cultural idea and individual transformation in its pursuit has been recognised, for example, in the context of nationalism which, as Cohen argued, becomes a compelling means of both locating and depicting '[individual's] selves' (Cohen, 1996: 808), in the context of religion (Taylor, 1976) or quasi-religious cults (Zeller, 2014). Yet, it seems to avoid the topic of intellectuals who are portrayed as independent figures with malleable minds (Mannheim, 2015). Gross comes close to my understanding with his discussion of intellectual self-project (Gross, 2008). In his account, the fundamental idea is 'that as thinkers move across the life course and are affiliated with different institutions, they may pick up from some of the identity elements that they integrate into their self-concept narratives' (Gross, 2008: 279).

Intellectuals, however, do not pick anything up from institutions – they learn from performances which usually occur within an institutional framework. That there are 'certain ideas, symbols, objects, and practices (...) culturally coded as sacred and worthy of veneration, while others (...) as profane and deserving of scorn' (Gross, 2008: 279) means hardly anything unless these symbols are enacted in one way or another. And even if sacred symbols are enacted, they may be enacted in a way that simply is not skilful enough, hence not effective or impressive. This cannot be sufficiently accounted for in a model that brackets performance and its conditionality on performer's skills as well as propitious conditions, which in this thesis, following Alexander's work (2004), I termed the elements of performance. Gross' account of institutional influence on identity, moreover, privileges intellectual or academic

environments with firm institutional entrenchment over those that lack it – such as unofficial seminars. These ‘institutions’ had to be created and recreated upon every meeting and were dependent on the presence of the central actor. Therefore, this chapter emphasises the role of performance and highlights how new conceptions of self are emerging through its successful ritual effect.

My understanding of intellectuals, therefore, challenges the conventional wisdom of institutional or network-oriented frameworks. These works see actors engaged with ideas and cultural goods production, their choices of a mentor and lineage continuation usually as a matter of pragmatic choice (Bourdieu, 1990; Collins, 1998; Collins and Guillén, 2012; Guillén and Collins, 2019). To the contrary, I argue that these performances galvanize solidarity among members of the audience – for better or worse. The ritual effect of successful performances further facilitates the emergence of new forms of subjectivities with different motivations and symbolic sensitivities. My portrait of intellectuals here shows them as social actors who are not necessarily always driven by status or gain. Indeed, pragmatic choice does play a role in their decision-making and life strategies. But often, intellectuals can choose a particular trajectory (even one that seem less advantageous) because are drawn to a charismatic figure who, by the virtue of their performances, influences and inspires them to think differently. They discover new truths, motivations, they adopt new moral commitments. In this case, this new solidarity and subjectivity together equipped the actors well to cope with the anxiety of living in a world in which one hardly knew what was actually true, whom to trust, and when the police could come knocking on the door.

Spaces of Solidarity

To explore the effect of unofficial seminar performances on their participants, it is important to first look at the level of social relations. In this section, I explore how solidarity emerged within the groups that pursued philosophy together. As I argue, unofficial philosophy performances facilitated the emergence of solidarity along two principal vectors: vertical and horizontal. For the destabilised network of non-conformist actors, unofficial seminars thus became safe havens of friendship and emancipation – even though they provoked police interventions.

In general, it is not hard to identify the numerous spaces or platforms on which social solidarity of actors involved in the non-conformist network emerged and played out during the four decades of the socialist regime. I principally follow Durkheim in his definition of solidarity as ‘the bonds that bind us to one another and to society, which shape the mass of individuals into a cohesive aggregate’ (Durkheim, [1893] 1984: 331), and see solidarity as ties of affection stemming from mutual recognition between actors as belonging to one community and/or serving the same historical, even metaphysical cause. This mutual recognition then roots mutual commitment, justifies support and altruism, and demonstrates to the individuals the existence of a supporting network. Such a network is crucial for coping with the anxiety and uncertainty of life under heavy social control. As Ivo Možný argued, under state socialism, unofficial networks of solidarity were crucial throughout Czechoslovak society, and actors relied on them in order to acquire various scarce resources: from job opportunities to consumer goods (Možný, 2009). These networks, both non-conformist and general, were later important in the mobilisation for protests that eventually brought the regime down.

One of the most important symbolic spaces in which solidarity was established were religious ceremonies and meetings of the unofficial churches – unofficial activities of the banned religions such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, or anti-Communist, non-conformist wings of the Catholic and Protestant churches. Similar communities emerged across various fields of beliefs and interests, from scouting to the environmental initiatives of the late 1980s. Particularly important were the scenes of unofficial music, jazz in the 1950s, blues and rock in the 1960s, new-wave rock and punk in the 1970s and 80s (Hagen, 2019), parts of which were intrinsically intertwined with the dissident community and cause.³⁶

These communities were organised around particular activities and lifestyles, and were often galvanised by charismatic founders. They offered a social space of both solidarity and meaning (all in their very different ways) to social actors, particularly youth, in Czechoslovakia. Indeed, activities such as those mentioned above were controlled and

³⁶ The origins of the Charter 77 lie in protests against the jailing of ‘underground’ musicians, later enshrined in collective memory as ‘the trial of the Plastic People of the Universe’, despite only two of the prosecuted having been in fact formally associated with the band (Bolton, 2012).

restricted (if permitted at all) by the Communist Party, and they were seen as rivals to the Party-controlled organisations such as the *Socialistický svaz mládeže* [Socialist Youth Union] and its daughter organisation the *Pionýrský oddíl SSM* [Pioneer Organisation of the SYU]. For the Communist Party, they were dangerous because they undermined the utopian vision of a socialist future which Glaeser astutely calls ‘monolithic intentionality’ (Glaeser, 2011) – the idea that all people should be pulling together for the party and building the socialist future. But by the 1980s, the zeal and energy which initially brought the project of socialist society to life had waned, and people were left with social control and institutions it engendered. Deviance was seen as dangerous exactly because it generated solidarity on a level that was different from the Party-organised life and, potentially, threatened the idealised homogeneity of the socialist society.

In his recent work on unofficial music in Czechoslovakia, Hagen (2019) notes that the most important aspect of the music scene was how it helped ‘sort out and align groups of people’ (Hagen, 2019: 94). Unofficial philosophy was similar and seminars were another example of such a scene of mutual solidarity. This emerging solidarity in seminars can be described as having two basic vectors: one vertical and the other horizontal. This means that spirals of charismatic performances stirred attachment and solidarity first upwards towards the central actor, the performer, and second sideways between the participants in these lectures. This solidarity became effective as a means to stabilise the network of non-conformists and even recruit new adepts who through the unofficial seminars entered the secretive realm beyond state-organised life in Czechoslovakia.

By vertical solidarity, I refer to the emergent attachment between the performer and the audience, translated usually into a leader-followers relation. Through effective charismatic performances, underpinned by the sense of intellectual exclusivity and the deemed responsibility for the existence of philosophy described in *Chapter 6*, unofficial philosophers cast themselves for their students as socially and culturally important actors whose reputation needed to be defended against the polluting power of the state. Of course, they were not defending their legitimacy and excellence for the prestige and benefits of being associated with an iconic lineage, as the unofficial philosophers were, in the eyes of the police, right-wing bourgeois demagogues. The audiences, however,

were imbued with and unified by a sense of both national and civilizational importance of their task.

An extreme case of such impassioned defence, at least in the conditions of late state socialism, relates to Julius Tomin and illustrates the emergence of solidarity as well as elevated confidence of unofficial seminar participants. On 2nd April 1980, Tomin was about to convene his regular philosophy seminar, when, at 5.30 pm, the police arrived at his door to 'preclude individuals from entering the flat of Julius TOMIN and attending his lecture' (KR-705731 MV). To warn incoming students, Tomin sent his 11-year-old son Marek downstairs to look out for them, let them know that the police were in the building and that the meeting would be convened later in a bower in the nearby Stromovka park. The police officers quickly understood this plan and decided to arrest Tomin. By that time, however, there were already 12 members of the group standing in front of the house, waiting for him to walk with them to the park. As noted in the file,

when Julius Tomin left his residence, [the officers] requested that he produces his ID, which he did produce, but immediately got to running back up the stairs to his flat, with the assembled individuals following him, aiming to access Tomin's flat. Julius Tomin was apprehended [by the officers] and, because he refused to comply with [their] assertive request to follow them to the police vehicle and demonstrated attempts to passively resist, he was carried [by the officers] to the vehicle (...). Other participants gathered in front of the residence and refused to scatter. Because there was a potential for [the meeting to become] a public provocation, two more vehicles were called to prevent antisocial performance. After appeals, the gathering in front of TOMIN's residence scattered at 8 pm. (KR-705731 MV)

This example shows the dedicated interest of the audience, the existence of solidarity ties towards the performer, and the commitment on the side of the performer to defend his students from the obtrusive police (sending a warning, changing the seminar venue). The audience (10 participants and Tomin's two teenage sons), appalled by the interference of state authorities and the arrest of their teacher, staged an impromptu protest in front of his house which lasted for at least one hour. With regard to the problem of omnipresent anxiety of non-conformist network, it is important to note that in this case, despite police presence, the collective of Tomin's students (the majority of them were regular participants) were able to successfully express their anger over police actions in a country where public protests unapproved by central authorities were generally unimaginable. As a collective emerging around a charismatic figure of an

unofficial philosopher, they were momentarily transformed into a community capable of contrarian meaning-making, disregarding uncertainty and possible consequences.

Another expression of solidarity ties between Tomin's students and their teacher was, for example, holding hunger strikes – a strategy which Tomin, inspired by Gandhi, used himself. In this case, similarly to the previous one, the police reported 'that, on 7th May 1980, in Julius TOMIN's flat in Prague 7, Keramická 3, another recessionary³⁷ lecture, visited by individuals under criminal investigation' (KR-705731 MV), will be taking place. According to a secret police report:

to terminate this meeting, which is abused as a presentation of the so-called [Czechoslovak] opposition, it was decided (...) to summon Julius TOMIN with the objective to warn him again to cease his activity, otherwise all legal measures shall be used to terminate these meetings. (...) Because TOMIN, by his actions and behaviour, expressed the goal to continue his hostile actions, it was decided (...) to isolate [him] in a detention cell. (KR-705731 MV)

Unfortunately for the police, however, 'it was found that the whole event (...) in TOMIN's flat was organised and secured in advance. 15 people met here to sign a petition promising to undertake an individual protest hunger strike and stated their intention to continue attending the lectures' (KR-705731 MV). The regular audience in this case performatively displayed their devotion to the teacher, and the system of norms and symbols that he represented through his performances, through a symbolic commitment to the hunger strike, a traditional form of non-violent protest.

Interestingly, what can be seen here is a twist on the Durkheimian tradition, reminiscent of works such as Rothenbuhler's analysis of mass strikes. Rothenbuhler criticised the dominant 'focus on political ritual of social centers, on official or traditionally sanctioned culture' (Rothenbuhler, 1988: 67), which tends to forget that those who 'intend to do violence to the official culture and its central structures' (Rothenbuhler, 1988: 67) usually have their own rituals that are just as charging as those of the centre. In other words, rituals do not consolidate only the power of the governing institutions but also of the groups that wish to challenge them. This was indeed the case of unofficial philosophers and their audiences, whose repeated performances were clearly

³⁷ The term 'recessionary' was not commonly used by the police. It refers to a specific Czech meaning of the term *recese* [recession] – ironic provocation. The origins of the meaning lie in the 1930s Prague avant-garde collective named *Recesisté* [Recessionists] who advocated purposeless humour.

not rituals that brought the society together to confirm its togetherness under socialism. To the contrary, they solidified, inspired, and in some cases empowered their audiences to act as actors contravening the centre of social power and the deemed nature of the social contract.

It is necessary to point out, however, that this emancipation was conditional on the actual performance of the unofficial philosopher. Protests like those described above were rare and, in this context, could materialise only because Tomin himself performatively prepared the grounds for it. He refused to terminate the seminar, he encouraged his students to run to his apartment, and he also regularly held hunger strikes before. While many seminars were terminated, and conveners were many times questioned, none of them so actively encouraged the police to demonstrate the authoritarian nature of the regime. Tomin's performance provoked a violent reaction, something he likely expected. It raised the stakes and transformed the situation into theatrical enactment of the Czechoslovak State's struggle against a poor philosopher. In his performances, Tomin included the State forces as another actor, and thus rendered the inflated narrative of the struggle between unofficial philosophers and polluted State forces palpable. However, there were not many such protests because no other unofficial philosopher was willing to stage such risky stunts.

This solidarity occasionally extended also beyond the lifespan of the individual unofficial philosopher. The ultimate example of posthumous devotion is Jan Patočka, who was – and remains – numinously worshipped by his former students, in particular those who experienced his private seminars after 1972. On the day Patočka died in March 1977, his former students Ivan Chvatík, Jiří Polívka, Jiří Michálek, and Miroslav Petříček met with his son-in-law Jan Sokol, himself a frequent unofficial convener, and secured Patočka's manuscripts with the explicit intention to archive them for posterity. Between 1977 and 1989, the circle of these devoted followers published 27 handmade samizdat books of Patočka's collected works and stored a number of his documents and personalia. This commitment of Patočka's students, spawned through his charismatic performances delivered in the 1960s and 70s, remains active. Over time, it took various institutional forms, such as the Jan Patočka Archive, created by Chvatík in 1990, which continues to exist to this day, as well as the Center for Theoretical Studies at Charles

University, which accommodates the archive and has employed many former participants in the unofficial philosophy network.

In the case of Patočka's archivists, this solidarity can be seen as encouraged by his own style of performance. Comfortable in his script of the sage, as discussed in *Chapter 5*, Patočka distinguished himself both by entertaining profound symbols and by spontaneous presentation without the support of a written document. Enchanted by his charismatic lectures, his students began archiving when he was still alive. At the same time, solidarity with Patočka also moderated the involvement of his audiences in riskier projects. As one of the interviewees involved in archiving the late philosopher's works remembered, he did not go to seminars where police were known to intervene because he 'had Patočka's manuscripts at home, I couldn't afford to get locked up. I had to be really careful' (interview 3). These precautions were not necessary with others, such as Hejdánek, whose students took notes for their own use (and interviewees 2, 6, and 9 kept their notebooks until today), but did not edit them and publish them. This was likely because Hejdánek was his own archivist. He had meticulous documentation and notebooks and instructed his students to record lectures for absent audience members.

As the example of Tomin above suggests, at the same time, there was also a relationship emerging which was oriented the other way, a relationship of the teacher towards their students. Contrary to the accounts of intellectuals that see supporting students and followers as a part of self-project aimed at posthumous survival and reputation (Collins and Guillén, 2012; Lang and Lang, 1988), the ties that materialised in unofficial seminars were those of affection, support, and keen interest. One interesting example of a practice documenting trust and solidarity is book-lending and gifting. As one of my interviewees recalled about Ladislav Hejdánek, when he began studying Husserl, 'he gave me some of these crazy expensive Husserliana³⁸, they are until today the most expensive books that I have in my possession (...), I got many of such extremely rare, great book gifts' (interview 5). The interviewee further recalled that Petr Rezek was very similar, and 'opened his well-supplied library to his students' (interview 5). A student who visited lectures of Maximilian Duren, a mystic amateur philosopher who

³⁸ Husserliana is a rare edition of Edmund Husserl's collected work, initiated by Herman Van Breda who secured Husserl's manuscripts during the WWII and published since 1950 by the Husserl Archives at the Catholic University of Leuven.

lectured in Miroslav Vodrážka's place in 1980, also recalls how he 'visited him, [because] he had a library with a lot of works on Judaism, for example, he would lend them to me, and we would discuss them' (interview 13).

The emergence of solidarity ties in unofficial seminars indeed did not concern merely the relationship between the central performer and the regular audience. Equally important was the creation of what I termed the horizontal vector of solidarity: the ties between the audience members. Indeed, it would be incorrect to assume that the audiences of unofficial performers were, initially, collections of complete strangers. The structure of relations varied from one group to another, but it can be generally said that participants had often acquired access or an invitation through previous network connections. Most often, these initial contacts occurred via high school or university peers – the core of Tomin's group, for example, were students (and eventually former students, after they were expelled) of the Czech Technical University in Prague. Other participants were familiarized with the non-conformist network through a family member or a neighbour. Some were indeed born right into the centre of the network, being the children of dissident families such as the Němecs, Bendas, Vaculíks or Kohouts. Significantly, they were often of similar age, between the mid-teens and mid-20s, at a stage when individuals find themselves in the ambiguous, liminal position between childhood and adulthood, and experience intense moments of searching for their place and purpose in society.

Most often, these networks were mobilised due to the experience of charismatic performances, which I already demonstrated in the case of students drawn to Patočka's seminars via his charismatic lectures. A good example of such network mobilisation to acquire access to unofficial philosophy is the following interviewee account about their friend from the university:

When I was in the second year at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, she invited me to their flat to see Zdeněk Kratochvíl. It wasn't a seminar, just a one-off lecture, maybe a part of a cycle (...). I was enamoured of it, it was the first encounter with a live presentation of philosophy, and a very strong one. [The lecture] also had a continuation, so I went there too and then I began to bother her all the time to tell me when there will be next Kratochvíl. (...) In 1979, she grew tired of me. Perhaps, she had a feeling that I should start doing it more systematically than just

attending single lectures. So, she told me about this Daniel Kroupa and his project... (interview 5)

In other cases, however, the initial network connection emerged with the conveners themselves, who granted an invitation to the course. An interesting case is that of Milan Balabán who incorporated an existing group of his navy colleagues into his audience. As his student remembered, ‘there were also his canal-diggers, lads that he would lecture to in a pub after the shift and invited them to his flat. It wasn’t some kind of rich elite club’ (interview 6).

Although unofficial seminars were created by actors who already had some relation to non-conformists or even held a well-entrenched position in the non-conformist network, they also further facilitated the cohesion within the emerging seminar group. One obvious example of emerging horizontal solidarity was Patočka’s first students, a group of actors who came to know one another while attending and recording his university lectures and later played a major role in maintaining his legacy as well as the entire unofficial philosophy scene. But we can easily find friendships emerging among the younger generation, that of their own students later. As one of the students of Daniel Kroupa recalled, they

attended the seminar because I was interested in philosophy, and later because I found friends there (...). The participation had a great significance for me, mainly because they supplemented the education that was otherwise inaccessible (...). Moreover, it was an environment of mutual friendship based on philosophy, an environment of mutual trust and search for a meaning in the nonsensical regime (interview 9).

This is indeed not surprising, as shared participation in performances and shared admiration of the performer combined with intense intellectual effort (preparation, reading, performative exegesis) provided actors with shared symbolic structures to think about, think through, and discuss. Participating in relatively stable seminar groups and lecture audiences, some lasting for over a decade, drew actors close, and offered them sufficient time to come to know each other’s dispositions and behaviour. In this regard, it is also not surprising that groups such as that of Kroupa and Tomin also saw romantic relationships emerging, and even several marriages.

Therefore, unofficial seminars became an environment that was a form of safe haven for actors in the anxiety-ridden non-conformist network. This was particularly pronounced

among the audiences of those philosophers who presented their seminars as acts of philosophy's redemption. One example was Hejdánek, whose audiences clearly knew that they espoused a joint commitment and non-conformist orientation. Together, they were not afraid of the police. As a participant in Hejdánek's group said,

we never discussed stuff such as copying leaflets in the seminars, nothing that would endanger our work. That was indeed undercover. But at the same time, we did not hesitate to say what we thought. This was pure philosophy, we didn't mind them listening. We weren't, in this sense, making our opinions secret (interview 2).

A similar sense of security is recalled by a student of Daniel Kroupa, who was a Charter 77 signatory while convening his group. When I asked whether the participant was afraid about meeting with a person active in the opposition, the former student replied:

Look, with Daniel, we knew that he wouldn't spread it, and we knew that we wouldn't spread it anywhere too, so one could be relatively sure nothing was going to happen. There were also other places where I knew the danger was greater, like at Ivan Havel's, but it was also such a nice environment and the lectures were so interesting that I just figured – whatever (...). At Daniel's, we felt safe. (interview 5)

Another striking expression of solidarity was the actors' repeated unwillingness to surrender the names of their co-students to the police. As the police noted in a report from the questioning of one of Hejdánek's students.

Question: On 5th May 1980 at 6 pm you were identified by police officers before your visit to Dr Hejdánek. State the purpose of your visit, other individuals who participated in this visit, and all the circumstances of the visit.

Answer: In April 1980 Dr Hejdánek initiated a cycle of lectures on the topic of introduction to philosophy, which I have been visiting from the start. The topics were:

- The place of philosophy in human life
- The relationship with the Truth
- Experiencing the Truth
- Analysis of Kierkegaard's treatise 'The Sickness Unto Death'

(...) These lectures are public and open to anybody interested. All individuals who participate

(...) I consider close to myself, and therefore I refuse to quote their names. (KR-830053 MV)

An interesting example is that of a participant who was a regular audience member at Ivan M. Havel's salon and willingly met with the police throughout the 1980s. This was

understandable, as the person had already been sentenced to two prison terms during the 1970s for his involvement with the non-conformist network, and clearly sought to avoid further trouble by providing the police willingly with the required information. In his own words recorded in a police report, '[the actor] is a proponent of a dialogue [between the state and non-conformists] (...) but under no circumstances [the actor] would agree to work for the [police]' (KR-829108 MV). Among the things he kept secret, were the names of audience members or lecturers who met in Havel's flat. According to the police report:

He stated that on 29th April 1985, he again attended a lecture in the flat of I. Havel, organised between 7 pm – 10.30 pm, with about 15 individuals present. The lecture was on Greek philosophy. [The participant] refuses to quote the name of the lecturer and other participants. (KR-829108 MV)

Again, two weeks later, the police reported that the participant

on 13th May 1985 attended a lecture in the flat of Ivan Havel (...) The topic was not consistent with the cycle, and it explored the problem of feminism in an advanced technological society (...) The lecturer was a specialist – sociologist, whose name [the participant] refuses to quote. (KR-829108 MV)

And still, more than four months after the previous meeting, the participant refused to name any other person, and even stated the legitimacy of the educational project to the police officer:

On 30th September and then 14th October 1985, lectures took place again in the flat of Ivan Havel. [The participant] attended both (...). According to [the participant], they were attended by around 15 people, he refuses to quote the names of other participants or the lecturer. (...) These lectures are necessary, according to [the participant's] opinion, due to lack of free access to education, because university education is reserved mostly for the children of Party functionaries and the children of parents who disagree with the system, have no chance to study. (...) The situation in Czechoslovakia is, according to [the participant], against the Czechoslovak constitution, which guarantees education for everyone. (KR-829108 MV)

It is worth noting that the stance of this unofficial philosophy seminars participant was consistent, and the police were unable to obtain the names even by employing a secret agent who was supposed to acquire them from the participant. In 1987, the officer noted that even though the participant 'acts calm and natural, he refuses to mention specific names of individuals visiting lectures' (KR-829108 MV), while, interestingly, having

little hesitation to openly criticise some of the leading Charter 77 figures. In 1988, after 3 years of monthly interviews, the police decided that the individual was not breaking any laws and terminated the contact.

In other words, the audiences spawned by unofficial philosophy performers were collectives in which actors also offered each other support and developed personal relationships. They became communities based on trust and common commitment. This was in large part due to performers who succeeded in presenting texts, symbols, and the purpose of the seminars in a persuasive manner. They created spaces that were either perceived as safe (see Kroupa above) or situated the possible threat in a meaningful symbolic frame (the examples of Hejdánek or Tomin). The ability to mobilise a protest in the case of Tomin was an expression of this solidarity between the audience and the performer. It was reinforced exactly by this emerging trust between actors in the audience who could organise and support each other in voicing support for their teacher. For most of the participants I interviewed, these relationships continued even after the 1989 revolution. As one of my interviewees put it: ‘of course we keep on going together. How could we not?’ (interview 5).

However, in some cases, the relationships that emerged through participation in seminars became problematic when the unofficials made their way to official institutions in the 1990s. As one of my interviewees, an unofficial intellectual who became a head of a department at Charles University, recalled:

I imagined that I would create my department mostly from people who were either in the opposition or in exile. I really thought I could set the department up only with people who showed independence and autonomy. I succeeded for a time, I got people from the dissent, somebody came from Switzerland as well. But you can’t do this here, really. Eventually, I realised that the dissidents were a minority and that the majority despised them. The people whom I did not pick started saying that the dissidents had no academic degrees. But how could people who spent their lives in the opposition have degrees and qualifications? Yeah, they studied, some of them, but they had no publications. Everybody started saying that they were there just because they were dissidents. So, we were forced to start taking people who did not have this kind of past. Eventually, they took over. (interview 1)

Here, the affective ties created in charismatic communities through the shared framework of moral struggle clearly conflicted with the rationalised bureaucratic system

of the modern scientific process. Aside from retribution, the primary goal for unofficial intellectuals moving on to the institutionalised system of education in the early 1990s was to recreate the environment of unofficial seminars with its trust and moral zeal of contrarianism, which they came to regard as the principal value of intellectual life. Rather than with those whom they painted for two decades as immoral and incompetent, they wanted to work with other people who shared their clandestine experience and who proved themselves as trustworthy and adhering to the same moral principles. Academics employed in the official sphere understandably worried that their own pursuits and careers might be quashed by the incoming unofficials who lacked the bureaucratic requirements that they themselves worked hard to fulfil. The interviewee above is indeed a good example, since he became the head of his department in 1991, with his only previous formal experience being that of a research assistant at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, from which he was dismissed in 1978.

To conclude this section, unofficial seminars were places of solidarity that contributed to building and establishing the non-conformist network. It is indeed not surprising that a community which finds itself in a conflict increases its cohesion and forgets otherwise divisive differences in the pursuit of a common goal, a well-known idea established already by Simmel (Simmel, 1964). Horizontal solidarity, the solidarity between relatively equal participants/audience members, can be seen as a given in any intellectual movement, in which the common intellectual goal is established and articulated in moral terms. This cohesiveness of intellectual groups is something recognised by authors such as Farrell, who even described them as being ‘a surrogate family’ where ‘members may consciously or unconsciously see one another as brother and sister’ and a ‘mentor may be seen as a parental figure’ (Farrell, 2003: 13). For Collins, solidarity is indeed the ultimate reason why actors take part in interaction rituals, as ‘individuals are motivated to participate in rituals of highest solidarity’ and stay ‘away from those encounters in which they are subordinate or excluded’ (Collins, 1998: 30).

In the case of unofficial philosophers, horizontal solidarity was reinforced because both social and symbolic stakes were raised. Actors were acutely aware that any information given to the police might be used against them or their friends and instrumentalized to jeopardize their careers and pursuits. They were also aware that their reputation may be

tarnished if somebody found out that they provided the police with information; they would be shamed and isolated. At the same time, not talking to the police was not only a pragmatic decision but an ethical dictum of the milieu, where State authorities were constantly defamed as morally polluted. In the last example, however, I demonstrated that while this solidarity was beneficial in the authoritarian regime, it became more problematic in democracy, where solidarities that emerged in the socialist era could be seen as cronyism, offering preferential treatment to those with similar experiences of moral struggle.

These dicta were gleaned from the symbols and narratives that were expressed by unofficial philosophers in their seminars. It is between them and their audiences that I see another, vertical vector of solidarity emerging. Here, however, it is evident that the shape and expressions of this solidarity varied with the style of the central figure.

Tomin's daring performances, in which he provocatively included representatives of the state as unwilling actors in the theatrical demonstration of their unlawfulness, created heated situations in which the stakes were elevated even more than usual, and propelled the audience to react in a way that I could not identify with any other unofficial philosopher. In contrast, Patočka's spontaneous performances of profound knowledge and his secretiveness inspired actors to engage in an archiving project which, especially after his death, held them back from engaging in outstandingly daring actions. This suggests that to say that a charismatic leader is a mere role with a 'personal vision of some sort' which 'lends to the group a sense of mission' (Farrell, 2003: 86) is a simplification. The way in which intellectuals enact their charisma shapes how their group acts, the role that the group as such plays among its contemporaries, as well as the nature of its mark in the future intellectual histories. To understand this, it is necessary to pay attention to how intellectuals perform ideas before their audiences.

Unofficial Performances and Non-Conformist Subjectivities

In this section, I take one step further and explore the influence of unofficial seminars on individual participants, especially their understanding of their own selves and their position in the late state socialism. Active and regular participation in unofficial seminar groups that were organised around social actors with outstanding (or perceived as

outstanding) abilities to articulate meanings, could hardly leave unaffected how actors conducted their lives and how they perceived themselves. Through participation, non-conformists acquired access to new symbolic resources shaped by the role that their teachers perceived themselves as holding in the wider narratives, whether that of philosophy as a discipline, national rejuvenation, or religious resistance. Usually, it was a combination of them all. The encounter with such powerful symbols delivered by a charismatic authority and in an almost ritual setting then formed their audiences' understanding of their own role in the wider narrative and their sense of who they are and how should they navigate the world of socialist Czechoslovakia – their subjectivity. While these subjectivities converged in the general anti-regime disposition, they included various religious, political, and professional tendencies.

One such case of personal transformation engendered by an encounter with unofficial philosophy can be found in the secret police files related to one of Julius Tomin's students. When evaluating the possibility of approaching the student to become an agent, the police reported:

[The participant] arrived in Prague in 1979 as a student of the Czech Technical University in Prague. Very soon, she befriended students who acquainted her with the 'philosophy' of TOMIN and other CH-77 signatories. This 'education' changed [the participant] very much. 'Philosophical learning' of TOMIN became her only hobby. She began meeting with TOMIN, KYNCL, HEJDÁNEK, ŠABATOVÁ and the like during 'lectures' in various flats. Because of this 'philosophy', she was expelled from her studies. (KR-696375 MV)

In another case, a student of Hejdánek's, a former theology student, in an interview with the police, expressed similar fanaticism and noted that 'currently, it is /philosophy/ the only intellectual activity that fills all my free time and I aim to pursue it in the future as well' (KR-830053 MV).

In general, the shape of new subjectivities emerging through participation in unofficial seminars had moral parameters. Intense encounters with philosophical concepts and their further debating or examining in a collective of like-minded individuals contributed to the development of moral creeds and self-understanding. As one of my interviewees, a student of Hejdánek, recalled:

It wasn't explicit... I think it was a genuine attempt to do philosophy. He modelled it after the classic Greeks, and he was inspired by [Emanuel] Rádl³⁹ a lot. It wasn't just talking explicitly about what was the situation here. But to me, of course, there was an overlap. It was similar to that Havel's horizon above us, Havel's life in truth, I saw it as something identical, but this was more profound, more rooted in his own original philosophy. It helped people to take a stance in daily life, just like Havel's essays. But those were simpler. (...) Here, complicated topics were articulated in a way that even I, with no previous training in philosophy, could at least partially understand. And the moral dimension... he was discussing Bonhoeffer⁴⁰ a lot and this helped me to find a way through daily situations. That's something a school should do, but the official education failed us. (interview 2)

In other words, participation in the audience of unofficial philosophy became an important experience, often referred to by my interviewees as formative. Profound symbols delivered in a ritual-like setting became salient in their thinking and motivated actors to search further and engage with philosophical literature. It is also clear that it would be also grossly reductive to circumscribe the impact of unofficial seminars on mere thinking about the regime. To the contrary, they also inspired forms of thinking beyond this narrow frame, about morality, ethics in general, and the place of actors in the world. As another interviewee, who participated in the lecture cycle delivered by Bondy, Balabán and Machovec, highlights, to him the 'fundamental principle of these seminars was that they offered a moral stance, a moral perspective. It was never just an ideology. We always discussed a moral problem, we always discussed ethics' (interview 13).

As this interviewee further highlights in an episode from one performance of a Western visitor, this clear moral stance was often expected by the audience:

So, this important person, I can't recall his name, had a lecture, we all sat on the floor at Hejdánek's, and when he was done, we were all quiet. Hejdánek asked if we wanted to discuss what has been said. I asked, and many people told me later they were glad I did, I asked what did he want to say by all this. It made no sense philosophically, in our situation. It was like when the Scholastics squabble about how many angels fit on the head of a pin. Well, perhaps I was more brutal because Hejdánek said he would not translate my question. I simply felt that the person

³⁹ Emanuel Rádl (1873-1942) – Czech philosopher and biologist.

⁴⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) – German theologian and a member of the anti-Nazi Christian resistance, executed in Flossenbürg concentration camp.

was insensitive and that he spoke as if philosophy was just a thing for itself, detached from life...
(interview 13)

This indeed was another expression of the moral boundary between true, existentially underpinned philosophy that speaks to and from experience, and the polluted official one. A form of knowledge that was different, a philosophy that the participants perceived as not taking a clear moral stance and articulating it in a manner palatable for the audience, was seen as meaningless and even morally fallible.

Not surprisingly, for some participants, their philosophical pursuits became a source of confidence – one not underpinned by actual social position or affiliation with prestigious institutions, but rather related to a vicarious image of meritocratic order. Unlike in everyday socialism, here they finally held the elite position they thought they rightfully deserved. As one former non-conformist actor recalled:

I wanted to study performances studies and applied. Later I found out that I was among the best applicants but, because I was from a dissident family, the police came to the university and said that it was not going to happen. I realised I wouldn't get into any university, that I would be a stoker, that I would be a construction worker. And I was publishing a samizdat magazine, so sooner or later I would end up in prison. But now I studied philosophy. I wasn't any kind of a loser [anymore]. I was a philosophy student, and I studied with the professors who were expelled from universities (...). This was very important. (interview 8)

In other words, participation in seminars of unofficial philosophers imbued the audiences with a sense of empowerment through belonging both to an ancient lineage of philosophers, and a community of contrarian intellectuals infatuated with a sense of both moral and intellectual superiority over the official scene. This was particularly important, as both the police apparatus and official mass media subjected them to constant delegitimization and even humiliation – arrests, defamation, even forced hospitalisation. To these audiences, unofficial philosophers offered strong moral distinctions and both historical and metaphysical purpose.

Indeed, the nature of emergent subjectivity depended strongly on the individual trajectory of the student, the nature of the group that they belonged to, and the inclination of their teacher/s. For example, Petr Rezek's group of advanced students, taken over from Kroupa, influenced by Rezek's rigour and ability as well as his criticism towards other unofficial philosophers over time, developed a very similar

attitude. According to one of its members who was also invited by Hejdánek to join his group:

Even before I started attending Hejdánek's lectures, it was clear to me that I was a much better philosopher than all his students, and also better than Hejdánek himself. I think we actually were better, partially thanks to Rezek, his own rigour made this impression on us, and I think that it was in a way justified (...). We were so soaked with Rezek's professionalism that we were looking down on others, [to us] they were amateurs. (interview 5)

As another student from this collective told me, 'what I got from these seminars, was the belief that I can found my life on philosophy, by which I mean free thought' (interview 9). Perhaps unsurprisingly, this group of students who studied with Rezek (but also Kroupa and Ivan Chvatík) was one of the most active in the scene, and after 1989 successfully entered official academia. They were likely the academically most successful collective, with several of its members (Josef Moural, Štěpán Špinka, Lenka Karfíková and Filip Karfík) still holding university positions in the Czech Republic and abroad. While only one interviewee admitted it explicitly, it is likely they owed their eventual institutional success and heightened ambition to the conception of philosophy as a serious academic undertaking advocated by Rezek, contrary to the more esoteric performances enacted by others.

Another important aspect of subjectivities emerging through unofficial seminars was religion. Congruently with the declaratory atheism of the state socialist doctrine, Communist parties devoted considerable resources and attention to undermining the position of churches throughout Eastern Europe. The success of atheist politics varied with the relative position of the church in question and the particular country. In Poland, for example, the Communist movement had a hard time containing the Catholic church, which historically played a key part in Polish cultural life and was instrumental for resistance during WWII. In Czechoslovakia, the breaking down of religion was simpler. Bohemia was historically divided across the Protestant/Catholic lines, with the strong cultural presence of the Hussite and Brethren traditions. The former was successfully re-narrated and integrated into the Communist symbolic realm as the forerunners of their revolutionary movement. Slovak Catholics, on the other hand, carried a burden of guilt, as the principal supporters and organisers of the war-time clerical-Fascist Slovak Republic, a satellite state of the German Reich. The cooperation with the Nazis made

the Slovak church a very easy target for pollution and persecution. Despite prosecution and state control, unofficial or semi-official religious movements flourished throughout the socialist era, with demonstrations such as the National Velehrad Pilgrimage in 1985 or the Candle Demonstration in 1988 (Doellinger, 2002) being among the few public mass protests in Czechoslovakia between 1948 and 1989.

Key figures of unofficial philosophy were often closely tied to religion, as is clear already from *Chapter 3*, in which I linked the emergence of the unofficial scene to Christian-Marxist dialogue of the 1960s. Jiří Němec, Zdeněk Neubauer, and Daniel Kroupa were Catholics, Ladislav Hejdánek, Jakub S. Trojan, or Milan Balabán were Protestants (the latter two served as ministers). Religious inspiration, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, seeped into the way in which they understood and presented philosophy to their audiences: often as a form of inspiration and even cultural as well as individual salvation. In the context of Hejdánek's seminar, for example, Tony Judt wrote to the Jan Hus Educational Foundation that he 'was not prepared for the very religious sub-text, as they say' (Tony Judt JHEF report, 1986). Unofficial students were indeed attuned to religious symbols, which resonated well with their contrarian dispositions. Religion countered the declarative socialist narrative of permanent progress and offered profound moral meanings steeped in long-standing intellectual and cultural traditions.

As one of my interviewees, the student of Daniel Kroupa and Petr Rezek, described the religious influence:

Daniel was a Catholic, of course, and many people around him were Catholics too. I liked it and it almost brought me to conversion to Catholicism. Still today I consider myself to be somebody who would have gotten baptism if all the random circumstances perhaps aligned in a better way. Anyway, we did absorb these thoughts through some osmosis (...). Many people (...) became Catholics, some even rather important Catholics. (interview 5)

According to another participant who visited Milan Balabán's lectures at Mirek Vodrážka and Iva Vodrážková's flat, the impact of performances was more sophisticated than mere facilitation of a contrarian religious thinking. For some, they offered complex intellectual vehicles through which they could think through and articulate their beliefs:

We reached beyond the narrow and the rigid... The very restricted theology that I grew up with suddenly opened up in the confrontation with philosophy. So, in a way, it was a dissidence also against my own upbringing. Or dissidence, well... reaching beyond. It was something that should happen at that age. It was me testing the ground. And I became persuaded that this was the way it should be done, this responsible way, not a revolt, but a thoughtful reflection of my own position. It gave me the freedom both from the somewhat bigoted theology experienced in the community of my congregation as well as from the regime. (interview 6)

Here, what the interviewee describes, is how the participation in Balabán's audience and studying under his mentorship inspired him to new forms of thinking about religion. Interestingly, the conception of self that he describes as having developed was not merely one concerned with the actor's moral distance from the regime, but also intellectual position relating to their own religious community. As the interviewee further remembered:

I grew up in a very puritan environment. Only in these seminars, I discovered that you did not need to be a puritan to be a true Christian. But I also discovered the liberal stuff. It was [in these seminars] that I first encountered an atheist critique, and [learned] how to deal with it, how to deal with radical atheism. For me, this was very important, that [my faith] ceased to be merely blind but became a faith that was based on thorough reflection, meditated. (...) I am sure that this was formative for me, and in an absolutely fundamental way. (interview 6)

In other words, the subjectivities emerging in the various non-conformist collectives, albeit interlinked, were differentiated and complex. While the anti-regime stance was a generalised disposition, learned and/or enhanced through witnessing and participating in performances, it would be grossly reductive to say that there were only two homogeneous factions in the Czechoslovak social world – the party/official and the unofficial. While generally persuaded that they lived in an unjust society and that they could not obtain 'real education' (interview 6) at any official institution, actors with different histories and sensibilities moved through the non-conformist network, developing various ties and interests and searching for performers who resonated with them the best.

The Jan Hus Educational Foundation had also a formative impact on the formation of religious subjectivities among the audiences. Most importantly, in 1988 the foundation launched a so-called 'Cambridge Diploma' project, developed in collaboration with the University of Cambridge, and developed by Andrew Lenox-Conyngham. The

Czechoslovak side was organised by Milan Balabán. The course, which took place usually in Marta Chadimová's flat, had a proper syllabus and, besides Balabán's regular seminars, was visited by several religious studies scholars based at Cambridge and Oxford universities. As a participant recalls about the audience of the seminar: 'There were Protestants, there were Catholics, Anglicans too. (...) The people who lectured were even more interesting than the syllabus, at least for me' (interview 6). The program was concluded by examinations and papers that were supervised by Cambridge staff and taken out of the country for evaluation, upon which some of the participants were awarded a Certificate or Diploma in Religious Studies, according to their achievement. As one of the former students recalls, what was important was more than just the label of having a Cantabrigian education but mostly the development of professional skills:

It didn't really matter that it was Cambridge. Who could you tell, in that political system, that you had a diploma from there? What was meaningful was the rigour. It inspired us to focus on something, devote ourselves to it. (...) I have realised myself, even though I did have formal education, how our education system was shaped in a way that you got away with everything. This was a different system, a lecture once a month, seminars in the meantime, it was intense. You had to study. (interview 6)

Another important aspect of the unofficial subjectivities emerging in unofficial seminars was the political orientation. As I already noted, the non-conformist scene cannot be described as politically homogeneous – figures such as Petr Uhl, Julius Tomin, even Ladislav Hejdlánek were politically close to the left (some arguably more left-wing than the generally conservative Communist Party). Others, like Rudolf Kučera, Alena Hromádková, or Catholic intellectuals such as Daniel Kroupa and Pavel Bratinka were strongly inclined towards right-wing thinking. Through their charismatic performances, unofficial philosophers shaped (with varying explicitness) the political understanding of their audiences.

A particularly interesting form of emerging political subjectivity was political conservatism. Conservatism did not have a strong historical presence in Czech political discourse, although predecessors can be found at least during the 1918-1939 Czechoslovak republic in the National-Democratic and Agrarian Parties. The variety developed among Czech non-conformists, and very influential among those who

participated in unofficial philosophy scene, was a mixture of Austrian Catholic conservatism and, especially, Anglo-American neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism of the 1980s (Hanley, 2004: 36). The sources of this fascination with Anglo-American neo-conservatism (as well as Thatcherite politics later) among unofficial philosophers were twofold. The first was personal history, as several participants were familiarised with the tradition of British conservatism during their 1968-9 semesters abroad in Britain (Petr Pithart at the University of Oxford, Alena Hromádková at the University of Edinburgh). The second was the Jan Hus Educational Foundation.

While the Jan Hus Educational Foundation functioned predominantly as a support fund, it had a strong leaning to conservative political thinking and was instrumental in facilitating the emergence of intellectual infrastructure through which the ideas of conservatism were propagated. In addition, since 1980, the JHEF was presided over by Roger Scruton who over time rose to the position of prominent and controversial intellectual in Britain, especially through involvement in scandals such as the Honeyford affair (Parkinson, 2012)⁴¹. It must be noted that the JHEF supported both left- and right-wing Czech and Slovak intellectuals and indeed organised visits of both left-wing (e.g. Gerald A. Cohen) and conservative scholars such as Scruton himself. Czech conservatives also thought that having lectures from Western Marxists would be a good idea, as one of them told Ernest Gellner's son, David, that this would help the Westerners to realise 'how Marxism is false and rigid' (KR-855497 MV). Roger Scruton also used the case of Czechoslovak dissidents to advance his own agenda in the West. In 1988 he wrote an article on 'the new right in Central Europe', in which he effectively co-opted not only Bratinka (who indeed was very conservative), but also Patočka, Bělohradský, and Havel into the right-wing movement, even despite Havel's own rather left-wing identification, which Scruton dismissed as 'not authoritative' (Scruton, 1988: 462).

British visitors brought literature and supported translation projects. Petr Pithart, for example, translated Roger Scruton's book *The Meaning of Conservatism* into Czech in

⁴¹ The Honeyford affair was a scandal that unfolded after Ray Honeyford, a head teacher at Drummond Middle School in Yorkshire, published an article in Roger Scruton's conservative magazine *Salisbury Review* lambasting multiculturalism as the lead cause for decline in academic standards. Honeyford was widely criticised for the article.

1984, and the samizdat translation circulated the non-conformist network, reaching (in the small world of dissenting intellectuals) at least 70 people by 1985. As one non-conformist said in a debate with a British visitor, recorded by the police, the goal for Scruton's book was to 'be distributed first to Catholics and the most talented lads from Bolshevik families' (KR-855497 MV). Others, like Alena Hromádková, translated, for example, *The Salisbury Review*, Scruton's conservative outlet. These inspirations led eventually to the creation of the *Střední Evropa* [Central Europe] review, a conservative samizdat journal established in 1984 by the collective of conservative intellectuals centred around Rudolf Kučera. In 1988, the editors of *Central Europe* openly identified as conservative, declaring themselves the frontrunners of the emerging 'anti-totalitarian conservative theory, [which] is now being born' (redakce SE, 1988: 4).

The assemblage of right-wing, neo-conservative and neo-liberal ideas resonated very well with both religious and anti-Communist components of non-conformist thinking. As one of the participants remembered:

Besides reading Husserl, Daniel occasionally invited Pavel Bratinka. Bratinka lectured a lot on Hayek, for example, and it was this first introduction to this thinking for me, and I liked it. I would say we were influenced by this. Jiří Skalický⁴², after all, ended up in politics, and many people harbour this [right-wing] thinking, even though they never entered politics (...). We certainly were attentive to it. I have to say I was sympathetic to this thinking and as far as I can tell others too. But it wasn't explicitly political, surely no propaganda... after all, nobody even knew it thoroughly enough. Yet it did seep through, we knew about it from Daniel. Voegelin, Hayek, and Popper were the magnificent trinity... (interview 5)

Another actor of the unofficial scene recalled:

Through Pavel Bratinka, I discovered William F. Buckley, for example. That was something exotic at the time, but you could read it at the American Embassy. And some visitor from the Jan Hus Educational Foundation brought Ellis Sandoz's *Voegelinian Revolution*. Soon we ordered other things, such as all five volumes of *Order and History*. To this day, I think I'm probably the only person to have read it through. I became a Voegelinian. (interview 12)

This intellectual interest in right-wing, conservative politics was articulated politically at least since 1988, when Daniel Kroupa, Pavel Bratinka and Václav Benda, three

⁴² Jiří Skalický (1956) - Kroupa's student, the Minister for the Management of National Economy and its Privatisation (1992), the Minister for Environment (1996-1998).

colleagues from the *Paraf* editorial board, co-founded, together with other ideologically diverse dissidents, the *Hnutí za občanskou svobodu* [Movement for Civic Freedom]. Here, they formed two groups, one oriented towards neo-conservative thinking (Kroupa and Bratinka), and the other towards Catholic conservatism (Benda). Almost immediately, these emergent circles translated into newly established political parties, the *Občanská demokratická aliance* [Civic Democratic Alliance] of Bratinka and Kroupa and *Křesťanskodemokratická strana* [Christian-Democratic Party] of Benda. Both crucially shaped the ideological space of post-socialist Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic.

I began this chapter by establishing that unofficial seminars facilitated the emergence of solidarity and created environments that were either safe or ready to protest. In this section, I expanded the thread of this argument to claim that participation in unofficial seminars, to which actors were drawn by charismatic performances of philosophical knowledge, had a formative effect on their subjectivity. The impact of non-conformist activities on social actors has been noted in scholarship on Eastern Europe (Häberlen et al., 2018; Hagen, 2019), with emphasis on ‘authenticity’ as the content of the emerging subjectivities. But while I described authenticity as an important symbol in the previous chapter, I regard the shapes of emerging subjectivities as more complex than that. As I argued, the general outline of non-conformist subjectivities emerging in unofficial seminars was moral, with actors construing themselves as individuals in conflict with the regime. This moral orientation was then elaborated in terms of professional, religious, and political self-understanding of actors as attached to particular narratives and symbols. These forms of subjectivity interlocked differently in different actors. Being authentic was code for being non-conformist, contrarian – and that was expressed by adherence to (and self-understanding as an adherent to) forms of knowledge and behaviour that were perceived and represented as problematic for the socialist regime.

This is important for the sociology of intellectuals. While sociologists often write about intellectuals seeking success and attention (Collins, 1998) or resonance (Baert, 2015), they gloss over the fact that besides actors striving for recognition, intellectuals are also performing educators. Teachers who engage their audiences in charismatic performances possess the capacity – whether they know about it or not – to influence how the members of their audience think about themselves and the world around them.

This does not necessarily mean that they convert them to a narrow intellectual agenda, but they offer symbolic resources that may inspire and compel actors to develop an interest in particular problems or fields. An emerging interest may lead to the development of a new shape of subjectivity. But this level of influence cannot be seen unless sociologists have considered how intellectuals perform, what they perform, and explored their success (or failure) beyond asking about how they establish career or reputation within their field.

Conclusion

When asked about the structure of the audience in unofficial seminars he attended, an interviewee remembered that ‘it was a motley crowd. There were even people interested in astrology, in Kabbalah, (...) everybody who hungered for words that had some meaning, everybody who felt that words were deprived of their meaning in the public space, which was flattened by the Communist propaganda’ (interview 6). While clearly laden with the symbols of the non-conformist discourse, I find this statement to be accurate. Just like actors who become easily drawn to religious cults, the audiences of unofficial philosophy seminars were generally actors who felt that they required more than what the society they lived in allowed them. They felt alienated and were ‘spiritual seekers’ (Zeller, 2014: 43) searching for their place and deeper truths. Many experienced the totalitarian tendencies of the regime and longed for an alternative vision. This was, however, hard to come by without knowing the right people, since official outlets were censored, and the network was the only way to acquire information. They usually became a part of the unofficial seminar group by being invited or sent to the teacher, and once enticed, they began attending, although always aware that being a part of such enterprise might have serious consequences. As I demonstrated in *Chapter 5*, however, sometimes the charisma of the philosopher did not work on them, and they decided that the benefits were not worth the risk.

As I demonstrated in this chapter, participation in unofficial philosophy performances did produce recognisable social effects that I see as going beyond the vague ‘emotional energy’ (Collins, 1998). The first effect was solidarity, which I identified as emerging along two vectors – vertical and horizontal. While the latter can be generally found in

all intellectual movements and creative groups, the former is varied and its expression is strongly dependent on the actual situation that is co-created by the actor. I showed, for example, Tomin actively enacting a moral drama that propelled his students to extraordinary public protest, as well as Patočka's performances unwittingly inviting the emergence of an intellectual community that concerned itself with the preservation of his legacy. Others, such as Rezek or Hejdánek, invited different expressions of vertical solidarity. As dominantly taskmaster personas, their students were keen on demonstrating hard work – such as Hejdánek's student in *Chapter 5* who noted that 'you simply had to work' – to express this relationship to the teacher (interview 6).

That group structure and behaviour differed with the performances of the teacher highlighted a major deficiency in the dominant sociological theories of intellectuals such as that of Collins (1998). If intellectual communities are simply groups endowed with different capacities for emotional energy production, with this being the crucial aspect deciding their eventual success, then clearly Tomin's seminar would be the most successful, as it was surely the most charging. After all, the performances that the convener enacted were so powerful that they propelled the audience in several instances to vocal protest against the authoritarian regime. Yet, this seminar did not produce any significant intellectual results (or followers) when compared to others with actors who were still charismatic, but who moderated the emotional energy more carefully and were better concealed from the police. This is because although they might have charged their participants less intensively with emotions, the seminars of Patočka, Kroupa, or Rezek, who actually produced another generation of intellectuals, were not threatened by provocative behaviour of their own conveners. The nature of their performance enabled them to labour more consistently and over a longer period. This is something that cannot be understood without sufficient attention given to performance.

As I argued further in this chapter, the effect of unofficial seminars was deeper than solidarity, and the symbolic structures that made up the landscape of meaning of unofficial philosophers seeped into the subjectivities of participants. Unofficial participants changed their way of looking at the world and themselves and reinforced their general moral outlook with the inflated narrative of the civilizational struggle between the civic dissent and the evil state. This moral outlook enveloped three types of resources for subjectivity formation: the disciplinary, the religious, and the political,

which all interlocked and intertwined differently in different individuals. They could be so effective, easily intertwined and offer a sense of understanding and unity because, in the generalised meaning of pursuit of unofficial philosophy, these paths shared moral symbols of truth and contrarianism. It was indeed important that they emerged upon the general landscape of Czech culture, in which the academic/disciplinary, religious, and political pursuits are profoundly connected in figures regarded as foundational to the national struggle. The best examples of such figures central to Czech idea of historical process are Jan Hus, the university rector, philosopher, and heretic preacher who, among his other works, produced treatises on Czech grammar and orthography and fought for the use of Czech in Catholic liturgies, John Amos Comenius, the philosopher, theologian, and theorist of education, or Tomáš Masaryk, the philosophy and sociology professor who developed the geopolitical idea of Czechoslovakia and became its first president and, among other projects, helped re-establish the Hussite church (intended as a national religious platform). This is perhaps also the reason why the only unofficial seminars in Slovakia were either organised by the JHEF or transplanted by Czech-educated intellectuals. While Czechs celebrate Hus, Comenius, Masaryk, Borovský, Palacký and many others, the Slovak historical narrative does not feature contrarian intellectuals in such a prominent position.

In this respect, the performance approach highlights the actor-audience dynamic and offers thus an important improvement to the theories of intellectuals that rely on the notion of symbolic resonance to explain success, such as that of Baert (2015).

Intellectuals are not successful because they merely offer symbolic resources calibrated to resonate with the zeitgeist. They actively produce cultural ethos through performing in front of their audiences. Unofficial philosophers did not only answer questions that were already in place in the era of late socialism. Most of them tapped into deep cultural undercurrents, combining demonstratively symbolic resources from philosophy, religion, and politics, and compelled their audiences to rethink and elaborate their ways of understanding themselves and their role in the world. That is, ultimately, what intellectual success amounts to.

CHAPTER 8: Conclusion

This doctoral thesis explored the phenomenon of intellectual performances in unofficial philosophy seminars in socialist Czechoslovakia throughout the 1970s and 1980s. I argued against some of the central tenets in 20th-century sociology of intellectuals, as well as its recent advancements, by approaching the social actors who convened these clandestine enterprises from the vantage point of cultural sociology, specifically performance theory. My goal was to demonstrate that intellectuals (and by implication also other actors engaged in cultural production) are not interested merely in the pursuit of institutional domination, power, prestige, and comfortable lifestyle. They are also actors whose lifeworld is shaped by processes of meaning-making and self-presentation as well as moral commitments. It is by these performances that intellectuals leave a lasting mark on others – their audiences.

In the introduction, I set out to explore three fundamental research questions. The first concerned the motivation of actors to participate in unofficial seminars, the second inquired about the meanings underpinning their emergence and continuation, and the third addressed their effects. In *Chapter 4*, I showed how the stakes were raised for Czechoslovak non-conformists, who lived in constant fear and anxiety of police intervention as well as possible repercussions that participation in unofficial activities might have had on their career. I argued that what motivated participants to study philosophy in such a situation was their encounter with skilled performers of philosophical knowledge. As I demonstrated in *Chapter 5*, the most successful unofficial philosophers distinguished themselves by charismatically enacting the scripts of their trade, especially those of the sage and the taskmaster. In *Chapter 6*, I answered the second research question by exploring the meanings associated with unofficial philosophy. Specifically, I explained that performances of unofficial philosophers were all the more successful because they unfolded upon a landscape of meaning created by unofficial philosophers themselves, which emphasised the role of philosophy as a moral pursuit founded on an almost transcendental inspiration. Finally, I answered the third research question in *Chapter 7*, where I argued that performers of unofficial philosophy created safe havens of mutual trust and solidarity, and offered their students symbolic resources in a manner so persuasive that they propelled them to think differently about

themselves and their place in the world. Here, they felt safe from the state, and they knew that they were doing something fundamentally moral – studying philosophy – and thus undermining the immoral socialist system.

This thesis, therefore, returns to the roots of cultural sociology, namely the late work of Émile Durkheim ([1912] 1995) who argued that societies need to engage in ritual events in order to maintain their symbolic systems as well as their profound embodied sense of togetherness. The Prague network of non-conformists verged on anomie, discouraged systematically by the police as well as lack of public recognition. As I argued, the network did not dissipate under pressure because at its centre were performers who were able to persuade their audiences that there was moral meaning in the pursuit of the general dissident project and that their particular line of cultural production was a meaningful form of resistance. In other words, they tapped into the deep structures of meaning and offered powerful symbolic resources that prevented looming anomie. Philosophy was one form of such pursuit, one scene amongst others such as religion, music, or art. Indeed, my results are in line with later Durkheimian research (Rothenbuhler, 1988), and suggest that, especially when seen from the performance perspective that highlights the effort and meaning-making creativity of actors, ritual and ritual-like gatherings do not only reinforce the general societal values of the centre but consolidate also the peripheral, contrarian environment.

Most importantly, this thesis also offers an alternative sociological perspective on intellectuals. Intellectuals have been portrayed as figures obsessed with power and prestige (Bourdieu, 1990) or, more recently, as addicts seeking esoteric emotional energy (Collins, 1998). They pursued careers that were consistent with their class (or classlessness) and provided them with a comfortable living. I took a different path and focused on how intellectuals perform their ideas and embody the intellectual tradition that they purport to belong to. In my research, intellectuals emerge as actors articulating strong moral symbols, combining and recombining them into narratives that capture their audiences and can potentially change their followers' intellectual trajectories and even their life course.

Approaching events in which intellectuals disseminate their ideas as performances, rather than Collins' impersonal interaction rituals that in one way or another never fail

to deliver (Collins, 1998), allows better insight into why and when intellectuals succeed or fail, and what their effect is. Here, let me take up an example from Collins' own work, connected to the intellectual tradition of phenomenology, discussed in my thesis. Analysing Heidegger's path, Collins argues that he was 'unexceptional until after 1916, when two things happen: he is passed over for the chair in Catholic theology, and he meets Husserl, newly arrived at Freiburg' (Collins, 1998: 745). Suddenly, Heidegger 'becomes his assistant and favorite disciple' (ibid.) and it is 'personal contact (...) that jolts his emotional energy that sets him to work using Husserl's tools' (ibid.). In no time, Heidegger became 'the most passionate and original thinker in Husserl's stable' (ibid.). The reader is left only to wonder about what exactly motivated Heidegger, who was an already established (although supposedly unexceptional) academic, to join Husserl's 'stable' (Collins, 1998: 745). Because Collins eschews individualised performance and symbolic structures, he cannot see that what prompted Heidegger to become Husserl's disciple was likely the elder philosopher's ability to perform, which would one decade later capture also the young Jan Patočka. What likely helped to entice Heidegger, a lapsed student of Freiburg Catholic seminary, was also the cultish structure of Husserl's grand phenomenological project and its ambition to purify the structures of experience. And it is indeed significant that the 'master' of phenomenology deemed Heidegger unworthy of becoming his follower, and let him struggle 'for almost a year before he eventually succeeded in arranging a personal meeting' (Safranski, 1999: 84). None of this can be explored through the lens of Collins' ritual theory. For him, the interaction ritual of contact occurred, and emotional energy flowed.

Furthermore, the approach explored in my thesis offers an improvement to existing accounts of intellectual performances, which have so far focused mostly on textual elements of intellectual performance (Baert, 2015; Baert and Morgan, 2018; Eyerman, 2011; Stevenson, 2019). Intellectuals, however, have always been much more than just texts. They distinguish themselves by their demeanour, theatricality, their ability to debate and manipulate meanings in real time in front of their audiences. With the current rise of individuals such as Jordan Peterson and others who rely on academic credentials and/or intellectual scripts in their performances to put forth their questionable agendas, I believe it is a pressing exigency for sociologists to look at how

these individuals convey their message beyond their mere textuality and to think about how the symbols that they communicate shape the subjectivities of their audiences. How do these intellectuals present themselves, what are the scripts that they use? Do they unite their audiences, or divide them? In which directions do they propel their followers – and why?

Importantly, the results of my dissertation highlight the relevance of social types for studies of charisma. This is something that researchers have already recognised in fields such as politics (Joossee, 2018), but which has been entirely overlooked in sociological studies of intellectuals. My research pointed to the existence of two important scripts that distinguished two different types of charismatic intellectuals. The first was *the sage*. The sage is a figure concerned dominantly with large intellectual claims that often entail a diagnosis of the era, civilisation, morals. They are the utopists as well as the doomsayers. Sages often succeed with more generalist audiences which allow them to articulate daring (but also enticing) claims that would be probably more thoroughly questioned and dissected among actors who are more interested and involved in technical discussions that constitute the field. In terms of effect, sages often leave in their students a sense of creed or a particular intellectual agenda that may be realised in various fields – religion, politics, academia. The second was *the taskmaster*. The taskmaster is a figure that is oriented towards the disciplinary field. It is a teacher, a disciplinarian who appeals to the audiences by putting forth the values that emphasise the importance thorough engagement with the intellectual tradition that constitutes the discipline. They appeal to more serious-minded audiences of actors with deeper interest in the subject, who are willing to invest the time and effort that is required to master it. The students then often develop the academic ambition. In comparison to the sage, however, the students of the taskmaster seem less likely to subscribe to their intellectual agenda.

As I have shown, however, charismatic intellectuals tend to combine these scripts and they switch between them as they see fit or as context of the performance requires. We could see this in the case of Jan Patočka, one of the main protagonists of this thesis. Although Patočka was strongly inclined towards the sage script, he also had a clear taskmaster tendency. Usually, his students became drawn to him through generalist lectures, in which he either engaged with the European intellectual tradition or offered

moral diagnosis of late modernity. The audience members who were the most perceptive then followed him into the more intimate setting of his seminars where his teaching turned more technical – he became a taskmaster. These seminars forged his emerging charismatic aristocracy, the people who organised his lectures, recorded them, edited his work and who take care of what they perceive to be his legacy.

It is important to note that these two scripts are not the only scripts that intellectuals perform, although they are indeed present throughout the Western world at least. As I have shown, there are also different scripts that intermeshed with the two master scripts described above. The particular combination of scripts is what I termed ‘the structure of charisma’. A good example of felicitous, charismatic combination is Petr Rezek, a clear taskmaster who, however, skilfully spiced his public character with deep interest in aesthetic and art. Nonetheless, script combination is not always fruitful. Perhaps the best example of infelicitous script combination was Julius Tomin who aspired to be a sage but was also powerfully drawn to a more rebellious script which I called ‘the rabble-rouser’. This refers to his raucousness, his willingness and readiness for any conflict. Such tendency rendered him attractive to a particular type of audience, especially young non-conformist ‘undergrounders’ to whom this behaviour clearly showed Tomin’s zeal, but put off some of those who had more serious intentions in pursuing philosophy. They sought a place where they could engage with philosophy in calm, undisturbed by police interventions, and wherever Tomin came, he turned it into the opposite. This is likely why he never managed to produce any intellectual followers – his performances were too disruptive, and, because of that, they attracted the wrong kind of audiences.

	The Sage	The Taskmaster
Performance	Moral or civilizational diagnosis	General and specialist disciplinary topics
Style	Lecture (larger audience)	Seminar (smaller group)
Audience	Non-specialist audience of enthusiasts	Specialist audience with disciplinary interest
Effect	Audience members converge and adopt moral creeds and intellectual agendas	Audience members acquire skills necessary for intellectual work

(Fig. 8.1.: The sage v. the taskmaster as intellectual type)

We can say that intellectuals differ in the way they perform. More importantly, however, the differences in their use of the culturally specific scripts such as that of the sage and the taskmaster has an impact on the dynamics of the group as well as on individual members. This carves out a new path to understanding the dynamics of the intellectual world. Specifically, it allows us to better explore how different performances draw, consolidate, and inspire different audiences and, thus, why some intellectuals produce followers to their agenda, while others fail to do so.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that performance theory is not a panacea for all the difficulties of the sociology of intellectuals. I regard it as an approach that has powerful exploratory and explanatory potential, but also one that can be also fruitfully combined with other approaches. While I see Collins' work as fundamentally deficient in his neglect of the performative dimension of intellectual rituals as well as their internal structure, I regard his network analysis as a potential pathway from individual intellectual performances to long-term processes. Network analysis could further show, for example, how ideas and interpretations travelled through unofficial seminars and how, perhaps, they remain in circulation due to the former unofficial philosophers ascending through high-profile networks into offices that carry significant institutional and intellectual authority.

More importantly, the performance perspective can be – at least partially – combined with Bourdieu's field theory, which I identified as one fruitful element of his general

edifice. With regard to the Czechoslovak unofficial seminars, field theory could illuminate why particular performers took the position they did. One potential path could be to see both official and unofficial philosophy pursuits as occurring within the general field of Czechoslovak philosophy and over the notorious orthodoxy-heterodoxy dynamics. In the quickly changing mid-20th century Europe, and in particular in the 1970s and 1980s that were characterized by the growing importance of the technical intelligentsia (e.g. Gouldner, 1979), and in particular in Eastern Europe, where sciences were guided by the Marxist-Leninist demand for usefulness in the socialist modernization project, Czechoslovak unofficial philosophers were, perhaps surprisingly, on the side of philosophical orthodoxy. To people like Hejdánek or Kroupa, it was the officials who were the heretics and betrayed the sacred pursuit of philosophy – they were seen as turning something intended to be one's life-pursuit into cynical careerism and something that was fundamentally enigmatic and transcendental into quasi-scientific Marxism. This approach may shed light also on why unofficial philosophers were so interested in forms of thinking that were either notoriously esoteric, such as Heideggerian phenomenology, manifestly traditionalist (classic Greek philosophy, in particular Plato), or intersecting with theology (e.g. Boenhoffer). In comparison to branches of philosophy that progressed towards a more scientific image of what philosophers should concern themselves with (for example analytical philosophy), they saw these as upholding the fundamental, orthodox concerns of what the discipline should be about.

While I believe that my thesis makes a significant contribution to the sociology of intellectuals, it has several important limitations. I acknowledged some of them already in *Chapter 2*, in which I discussed my methods. In terms of empirical research, if I had more time, it would be useful to explore the archive or recordings created by Ladislav Hejdánek and stored in the *Libri Prohibiti* library in Prague. So far, this archive which contains over a thousand recordings of unofficial performances is – due to its volume – an unexplored resource that offers an insight into the micro-dynamics of Prague's intellectual life in the 1980s. It is a potentially rich source for analysis of performer-audience interactions, as well as the style and content of performances.

Further, it would be useful to extend the scope of research also to other centres of non-conformist life in Czechoslovakia, such as Brno or Olomouc, or even to other socialist

countries, for example Poland and Hungary. What were the meanings of unofficial performances in Hungary, for example, which lacked the strong presence of phenomenology? It would be even better to compare the case of Czechoslovak unofficial philosophy with a contemporary case from a different intellectual and cultural context, such as the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (Hume, 2011). While the meanings would be indeed different, this would enhance the generalisability of the conclusions with regard to the cultural logic and social dynamic of contrarian intellectual performances. In general, unofficial education in any context is an almost entirely unresearched phenomenon.

Another prospective direction would be to explore how did the relations that were forged in unofficial seminars change after 1989. While my data suggested that in several cases they may have led to certain moral nepotism, in which former non-conformists offered preferential treatment to their friends from the dissent in acquiring academic positions, this claim requires further research. How did the vertical and horizontal vectors of solidarity change in official academia, when unofficial convenors and students alike acquired official positions? Did unofficial convenors such as Hejránek or Rezek maintain their charisma also after they became university professors, or did their ability to convene dissipate without the tacit risk of police intervention? Such research would be a significant contribution to the theories of academic intellectuals and the post-socialist transition in Eastern Europe.

Throughout the thesis, I occasionally referenced individuals who are well-known as the representatives of the Eastern European civic dissent and who played important role in the democratic transition, for example Václav Havel. Can it be said that philosophy performances in unofficial seminars contributed to the fall of the socialist regime? Of course, it would be preposterous to claim that unofficial philosophers brought down socialism. Its fall resulted from the eventual failure of the Soviet Union and the decline of its power over Eastern Europe. The agents of the change were the masses of students and workers who filled the squares of Prague, Brno, and Bratislava in November 1989. But undeniably, of those people who commanded the crowds from the stage and who developed the strategies for the transfer of power, many were at least partially products of unofficial philosophy seminars. Václav Havel, of course, was one of those enchanted by Jan Patočka's charisma, as were Daniel Kroupa and Václav Benda, to name just a

few. In Bratislava, Ján Budaj, the premier figure of the Slovak revolutionary organisation, used to participate in unofficial seminars organised by intellectuals such as Milan Šimečka or Miroslav Kusý who learned the practice in Prague. When the crowds of 1989 chanted that truth prevails, they were probably not all of them cognizant that the truth in Havel's dictum 'truth and justice prevails over lies and injustice' (justice and injustice were later changed to love and hatred) was the truth from the pages of samizdat journals to which he contributed. It referred to the existential authenticity that was supposed to lie in the core of unofficial philosophy.

The influence of unofficial seminar conveners and participants in politics and the public sphere was marked throughout the 1990s and lasts in some cases until today. Of course, Václav Havel became the president of Czechoslovakia and later the Czech Republic. Pavel Bratinka and Ivan Dejmal were ministers, and so was one of Daniel Kroupa's students, Jiří Skalický, as well as one student of Hejdánek's, Alexandr Vondra (now European Parliament member). Kroupa (with Bratinka) created ODA, a neo-conservative party with considerable influence as a governing coalition member between 1992 and 1996. Václav Benda established the KDS, a Christian-democratic party active between 1990 and 1996. Both together served on the committee that prepared the Czech constitution. Benda later also directed the newly founded Office for the Documentation and the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism. Many others served in the parliament as well as local politics.

Most importantly, however, unofficial seminar participants and conveners shaped the world of academia and cultural production. Out of the four new rectors appointed by Havel in 1990 to the four most prestigious Czechoslovak universities (Charles U. in Prague, Masaryk U. in Brno, Palacký U. in Olomouc, and Comenius U. in Bratislava), three (Radim Palouš in Prague, Milan Jelínek in Brno, and Miroslav Kusý in Bratislava) were strongly associated with unofficial philosophy as conveners, organisers, or participants. Milan Jelínek in Brno was later succeeded by two other participants in Brno seminars, Jiří Zlatuška and Petr Fiala, both currently politicians: Zlatuška a senator and Fiala chairing the neoliberal ODS party, the major right-wing force in post-1989 Czech politics. Others became professors immediately after the revolution (Hejdánek, Neubauer), some took up the jobs of academic officials, such as Jan Sokol who in 2000 became the dean of the Faculty of Humanities at Charles University. Sokol

was later the Minister of Education and ran for president with significant public support. Rudolf Kučera became the director of the first political science department in Czechoslovakia. Others went on to become academics (e.g. Lenka Karfíková, Filip Karfík, Josef Moural, Zdeněk Pinc, Martin C. Putna, Miroslav Petříček, Petr Rezek, Štěpán Špínka, Martin Šimsa) or journalists (Luděk Bednář, Petr Holub, Jáchym Topol).

While becoming important figures in local discourse, did unofficial philosophers fulfil their ambition to rejuvenate not only Czechoslovak philosophy but the discipline as such, which Václav Benda once articulated on the pages of *Paraf*? As I suggested at one point in *Chapter 6*, their success was rather modest. Intellectuals such as Benda, Kroupa, Hejdánek, Kučera, Sokol or Neubauer remained local and never enjoyed true global success. Havel did indeed enjoy a global celebrity, but not as an academic philosopher. Even Patočka himself never wrote the ground-breaking monograph – a problem that his former students grapple with until today. Bauman is perhaps right when he writes that a ‘cultural ideal stays pure and truly worthy as long as it is not contaminated by intrinsically impure reality; it stays pure and worthy because it steers clear of practical success’ (Bauman, 1992: 20). After Czechoslovak state socialism fell apart in late 1989, and unofficial philosophers entered the official scene, the structure of their moral commitment and their role in the historical narrative that they had been so concerned with dramatically changed. They went into politics and regular academia, finding themselves in entanglements that were very different from those they experienced as unofficial intellectuals. Socialism was already conquered, so there was no need for a revolutionary philosophy. At last, the truth prevailed.

The final question is whether the symbols forged by unofficial philosophers remain impactful in the landscape of meanings in contemporary Czechia and the Slovak Republic. Indeed, many of these symbols are restricted to expert academic discourses of philosophy. Nonetheless, some are still available to the general public and to political actors. Significantly, the legacy of unofficial seminars resurfaced with the recent political upheaval in Slovakia, which ensued after the murder of a young Slovak journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancé Martina Kušnírová. During the anti-government public protests that followed throughout the entire year 2018, symbols such as the truth occupied again a prominent place in the public discourse. And importantly, when the newly elected Slovak president Zuzana Čaputová, who owed much of her success to the

2018 protests, visited the Czech Republic in June 2019, she laid flowers on the grave of Václav Havel. Here, Čaputová paid homage to ‘one of the most inspiring political leaders’ (Tait, 2019) whose legacy is ‘specifically in that authenticity he exuded’ (ibid.). While receiving the European Political Culture Award in August 2019, she said that what Europe needs is ‘more truth and authenticity’ (*News Breezer*, 2019).

In other words, just as unofficial seminar conveners and participants remain active in Czech and Slovak public and intellectual life, the symbols which they once used in their boundary-work against their official counterparts, also persist. Of course, they are not remembered as such, because both the inherent power and vagueness of truth and authenticity often prevents us from seeing them as historically anchored concepts, which entered the parlance of Czech contrarians at a specific moment in history and with a specific function. Today, they are natural parts of the Czech and Slovak landscapes of meaning – shaping how actors interpret their collective past, present, and future.

REFERENCES

- Abbott A (1988) *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Abbott A (2001) *Chaos of Disciplines*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Alexander J and Smith P (2001) The Strong Program in Cultural Theory: Elements of a Structural Hermeneutics. In: Turner JH (ed.) *Handbook of Sociological Theory*.. Boston, MA: Springer, pp. 135–150. DOI: 10.1007/0-387-36274-6_7.
- Alexander JC (1995) *Fin De Siecle Social Theory: Relativism, Reduction and the Problem of Reason*. New York, NY: Verso.
- Alexander JC (2004) Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance between Ritual and Strategy. *Sociological Theory* 22(4): 527–573.
- Alexander JC (2010) The Celebrity-Icon. *Cultural Sociology* 4(3): 323–336. DOI: 10.1177/1749975510380316.
- Alexander JC (2011) *Performance and Power*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Alexander JC (2016) Dramatic Intellectuals. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 29(4): 341–358. DOI: 10.1007/s10767-016-9240-8.
- Alexander JC and Smith P (1993) The Discourse of American Civil Society: A New Proposal for Cultural Studies. *Theory and Society* 22(2): 151–207.
- Andreas J (2007) The Structure of Charismatic Mobilization: A Case Study of Rebellion During the Chinese Cultural Revolution. *American Sociological Review* 72(3): 434–458. DOI: 10.1177/000312240707200306.
- Ap (1982) French Philosopher Is Seized in Prague. *The New York Times*, 1 January. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/01/01/world/around-the-world-french-philosopher-is-seized-in-prague.html> (accessed 25 July 2019).
- Baert P (2012) Positioning Theory and Intellectual Interventions. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 42(3): 304–324. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-5914.2012.00492.x.
- Baert P (2015) *The Existentialist Moment: The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Baert P and Morgan M (2018) A performative framework for the study of intellectuals. *European Journal of Social Theory* 21(3): 322–339. DOI: 10.1177/1368431017690737.
- Baez B (2002) Confidentiality in qualitative research: reflections on secrets, power and agency. *Qualitative Research* 2(1): 35–58. DOI: 10.1177/1468794102002001638.

- Barker E (1993) Charismatization: the social production of 'an ethos propitious to the mobilization of sentiments'. In: Beckford JT and Dobbelaere K (eds) *Secularization, Rationalism and Sectarianism: Essays in Honour of Bryan R. Wilson*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 181–202.
- Barnes B (1977) *Interests and the Growth of Knowledge*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bartmanski D (2012) How to become an iconic social thinker: The intellectual pursuits of Malinowski and Foucault. *European Journal of Social Theory* 15(4): 427–453. DOI: 10.1177/1368431011423577.
- Battersby C (1990) *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Bauman Z (1987) Intellectuals in East-central Europe: Continuity and Change. *East European Politics and Societies* 1(2): 162–186. DOI: 10.1177/0888325487001002001.
- Bauman Z (1989) *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Bauman Z (1992) Love in Adversity: On the State the Intellectuals, and the State of the Intellectuals. *Thesis Eleven* 31(1): 81–104. DOI: 10.1177/072551369203100107.
- Bazin Y and Aubert-Tarby C (2013) Dressing professional, an aesthetic experience of professions. *Society and Business Review*. DOI: 10.1108/SBR-04-2013-0031.
- Benda V (1991) The Parallel 'Polis'. In: Skilling HG and Wilson P (eds) *Civic Freedom in Central Europe: Voices from Czechoslovakia*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 35–41. DOI: 10.1007/978-1-349-11117-6_2.
- Benda V (ed.) (2018) *The Long Night of the Watchman: Essays by Vaclav Benda, 1977-1989*. South Bend, IN: St. Augustines Press.
- Bendix R (1967) Reflections on Charismatic Leadership. *Asian Survey* 7(6): 341–352. DOI: 10.2307/2642609.
- Bendová M, Borovanská J and Vejvodová D (2013) *Filosofie v podzemí, filosofie v zázemí: podoby filosofie v době normalizace a po sametové revoluci [Philosophy in the Underground - Philosophy in the Background: The Faces of Philosophy during the Normalisation Era and after the Velvet Revolution]*. Prague: Nomáda.
- Blecha I (1997) *Jan Patočka*. Olomouc: Votobia.
- Bloor D (1976) *Knowledge and Social Imagery*. London: Routledge.
- Bolton J (2012) *Worlds of Dissent: Charter 77, The Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Bortolini M and Cossu A (2019) In the field but not of the field: Clifford Geertz, Robert Bellah, and the practices of interdisciplinarity. *European Journal of Social Theory*: 1368431018823140. DOI: 10.1177/1368431018823140.
- Bourdieu P (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu P (1990) *Homo Academicus*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu P (1991) *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu P (1996) *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. 1st ed. Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Braunstein R (2018) Boundary-work and the demarcation of civil from uncivil protest in the United States: control, legitimacy, and political inequality. *Theory and Society* 47(5): 603–633. DOI: 10.1007/s11186-018-9329-3.
- Brubaker R and Cooper F (2000) Beyond “identity”. *Theory and Society* 29(1): 1–47. DOI: 10.1023/A:1007068714468.
- Bryson B (2005) *Making Multiculturalism: Boundaries and Meaning in U.S. English Departments*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Burch ES (2010) The Method of Ethnographic Reconstruction. *Alaska Journal of Anthropology* 8(2): 20.
- Butler J (1988) Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory. *Theatre Journal* 40(4): 519–531. DOI: 10.2307/3207893.
- Camic C and Gross N (2001) The New Sociology of Ideas. In: *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology*. Oxford: Wiley, pp. 236–249.
- Camic CM (1992) Reputation and Predecessor Selection: Parsons and the Institutionalists. *American Sociological Review* 57: 421–445.
- Carlyle T [1841] (2013) *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Cetina KK (2009) *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cho J and Lee E-H (2014) Reducing Confusion about Grounded Theory and Qualitative Content Analysis: Similarities and Differences. *The Qualitative Report* 19(32): 1–20.
- Clark W (2007) *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University*. Reprint edition. Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press.

- Cohen AP (1996) Personal Nationalism: A Scottish View of Some Rites, Rights, and Wrongs. *American Ethnologist* 23(4): 802–815.
- Collini S (2007) *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Collins R (1975) *Conflict Sociology: Toward an Explanatory Science*. New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Collins R (1998) *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*. Revised edition. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
- Collins R (2005) *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Collins R and Guillén MF (2012) Mutual halo effects in cultural production: the case of modernist architecture. *Theory and Society* 41(6): 527–556.
- Connelly J (2000) *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945-1956*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Coser LA [1965] (1997) *Men of Ideas: A Sociologist's View*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Couch CJ (1989) From Hell to Utopia and Back to Hell: Charismatic Relationships. *Symbolic Interaction* 12(2): 265–279. DOI: 10.1525/si.1989.12.2.265.
- Čurda V (2013) Filosofické putování Milana Machovce [The Philosophical Path of Milan Machovec]. *Acta Universitatis Carolinae - Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis* 53(2): 155–173.
- Davies B and Harré R (1990) Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 20(1): 43–63. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-5914.1990.tb00174.x.
- Dawson LL (2011) Charismatic Leadership in Millennial Movements. *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195301052.003.0006.
- Day B (1999) *Velvet Philosophers*. London: Claridge Press.
- Derman PJ (2013) *Max Weber in Politics and Social Thought: From Charisma to Canonization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Detienne M (1996) *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece*. New York, NY: Zone Books.
- Doellinger D (2002) Prayers, Pilgrimages and Petitions: The Secret Church and the Growth of Civil Society in Slovakia. *Nationalities Paper* 30(2): 215–240.

- Douglas M (1979) *Implicit Meanings. Essays in Anthropology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Durkheim E [1893] (1984) *The Division of Labour in Society*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Durkheim E [1912] (1995) *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Reprint edition. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Edelmann A (2018) Formalizing symbolic boundaries. *Poetics* 68: 120–130. DOI: 10.1016/j.poetic.2018.04.006.
- Eyerman R (2011) Intellectuals and cultural trauma. *European Journal of Social Theory* 14(4): 453–467. DOI: 10.1177/1368431011417932.
- Farrell MP (2003) *Collaborative Circles: Friendship Dynamics and Creative Work*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Febvre L and Martin H-J (1997) *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800*. New York, NY: Verso.
- Feldman A (2012) Mysticism, Charisma and Religious Leadership. In: Giordan G and Pace E (eds) *Mapping Religion and Spirituality in a Postsecular World*. New York, NY: Brill, pp. 85–97.
- Fine GA and Wohl H (2018) Reading and reputation: sense, sensibility, and status in graduate education. *Qualitative Research* 18(5): 554–564. DOI: 10.1177/1468794118778613.
- Finlay B (2002) The Origins of Charisma as Process: A Case Study of Hildegard of Bingen. *Symbolic Interaction* 25(4): 537–554. DOI: 10.1525/si.2002.25.4.537.
- Fitzpatrick S (2000) *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*. New Ed edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fleck L (1981) *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*. University of Chicago Press.
- Foucault M [1975] (1995) *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Foucault M (2017) *Subjectivity and Truth: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1980-1981*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Frickel S and Gross N (2005) A General Theory of Scientific/Intellectual Movements. *American Sociological Review* 70(2): 204–232.
- Fulbrook M (1998) *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR, 1949-1989*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Fulbrook M (2011) *Dissonant Lives: Generations and Violence Through the German Dictatorships*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gerth H (1940) The Nazi Party: Its Leadership and Composition. *American Journal of Sociology* 45(4): 517–541.
- Gieryn TF (1983) Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists. *American Sociological Review* 48(6): 781–795. DOI: 10.2307/2095325.
- Gieryn TF (1997) Boundaries of Science. In: Tauber AI (ed.) *Science and the Quest for Reality*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 293–332. DOI: 10.1007/978-1-349-25249-7_12.
- Glaeser A (2011) *Political Epistemics: The Secret Police, the Opposition, and the End of East German Socialism*. Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press.
- Glassman R (1975) Legitimacy and Manufactured Charisma. *Social Research* 42(4): 615–636.
- Goffman A (2009) On the Run: Wanted Men in a Philadelphia Ghetto. *American Sociological Review* 74(3): 339–357.
- Goffman E (1983) The Interaction Order: American Sociological Association, 1982 Presidential Address. *American Sociological Review* 48(1): 1–17. DOI: 10.2307/2095141.
- Goffman E (1982) *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face to Face Behaviour*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Goodman-Delahunty J and Howes LM (2016) Social persuasion to develop rapport in high-stakes interviews: qualitative analyses of Asian-Pacific practices. *Policing and Society* 26(3): 270–290. DOI: 10.1080/10439463.2014.942848.
- Gouldner AW (1979) *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*. London: Palgrave.
- Graf F (1993) *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*. Baltimore, MZ: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Gramsci A (1989) The Formation of Intellectuals. In: Gottlieb RS (ed.) *An Anthology of Western Marxism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, pp. 113–119.
- Graneheim UH, Lindgren B and Lundman BM (2017) Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper. *Nurse education today* 56: 29–34. DOI: 10.1016/j.nedt.2017.06.002.
- Gross N (2008) *Richard Rorty: The Making of an American Philosopher*. Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press.

- Gruntorád J, Kosák M, Krumphanzl R, et al. (2009) *Kritický sborník 1981–1989*. Prague: Triáda.
- Guetzkow J, Lamont M and Mallard G (2004) What is Originality in the Humanities and the Social Sciences? *American Sociological Review* 69(2): 190–212. DOI: 10.1177/000312240406900203.
- Guillén MF and Collins R (2019) Movement-Based Influence: Resource Mobilization, Intense Interaction, and the Rise of Modernist Architecture. *Sociological Forum* 34(1): 27–46. DOI: 10.1111/socf.12479.
- Haberkern PN (2016) *Patron Saint and Prophet: Jan Hus in the Bohemian and German Reformations*. 1 New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Häberlen JC, Keck-Szajbel M and Mahoney K (eds) (2018) *The Politics of Authenticity: Countercultures and Radical Movements across the Iron Curtain, 1968-1989*. 1 edition. New York, NY: Berghahn Books.
- Hagen T (2015) The afterlife and renaissance of the Plastic People of the (twenty-first-century) Universe: Continuity and memory in Bohemia. In: *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*. London: Routledge, pp. 180–189.
- Hagen T (2019) *Living in The Merry Ghetto: The Music and Politics of the Czech Underground*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hanley S (2004) Blue Velvet: the rise and decline of the new Czech right. *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 20(3): 28–54. DOI: 10.1080/1352327042000260797.
- Harvey WS (2011) Strategies for conducting elite interviews. *Qualitative Research* 11(4): 431–441. DOI: 10.1177/1468794111404329.
- Havel V (2018) The Power of the Powerless. *East European Politics and Societies* 32(2): 353–408. DOI: 10.1177/0888325418766625.
- Heidegger M [1943] (1997) *Vom Wesen Der Wahrheit*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Hejdánek L (2008) Vzpomínky na Jircháře [Remembering Jircháře]. Available at: <https://www.hejdanek.eu/File/Show/1005522> (accessed 24 July 2019).
- Heracleous L and Klaering LA (2014) Charismatic Leadership and Rhetorical Competence: An Analysis of Steve Jobs's Rhetoric. *Group & Organization Management* 39(2): 131–161. DOI: 10.1177/1059601114525436.
- Hinnebusch RA (1984) Charisma, revolution, and state formation: Qaddafi and Libya. *Third World Quarterly* 6(1): 59–73. DOI: 10.1080/01436598408419755.

- Holy L (1996) *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation: National Identity and the Post-Communist Social Transformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Horne CM (2017) *Building Trust and Democracy: Transitional Justice in Post-Communist Countries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- House RJ, Spangler WD and Woycke J (1990) Personality and charisma in the u.s. presidency: a psychological theory of leadership effectiveness. *Academy of Management Proceedings* 1990(1): 216–220. DOI: 10.5465/ambpp.1990.4978722.
- Huebner DR (2014) *Becoming Mead: The Social Process of Academic Knowledge*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Hughes-Freeland F (2007) Charisma and celebrity in Indonesian politics. *Anthropological Theory* 7(2): 177–200. DOI: 10.1177/1463499607077297.
- Hume T (2011) Iran bans ‘underground university,’ brands it ‘extremist cult’. Available at: <https://www.cnn.com/2011/11/10/world/meast/iran-bans-bahai-university/index.html> (accessed 21 October 2019).
- Jacobs RN and Sobieraj S (2007) Narrative and Legitimacy: U.S. Congressional Debates about the Nonprofit Sector. *Sociological Theory* 25(1): 1–25. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9558.2007.00295.x.
- Jacoby R (2000) *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture In The Age Of Academe*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Jareš J (2014) Filozofická fakulta UK v období počátku normalizace. Historické souvislosti vzniku Analýzy FF UK [The Philosophical Faculty of the Charles University at the Beginning of the Normalisation. The historical context of the creation of the ‘Analysis of the PhF ChU’]. In: Jareš J, Spurný M, Volná K, et al. (eds) *S Minulostí Zúčtujeme: Sebereflexe Filozofické Fakulty UK v Dokumentech Sedmdesátých a Devadesátých Let 20. Století [We Shall Reckon With the Past: The Self-Reflection of the Charles University’s Philosophical Faculty In the Documents of the 1970s and 1990s]*. Prague: Academia, pp. 19–52.
- Joosse P (2006a) Silence, Charisma and Power: The Case of John de Ruiter. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 21(3): 355–371. DOI: 10.1080/13537900600926147.
- Joosse P (2006b) Silence, Charisma and Power: The Case of John de Ruiter. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 21(3): 355–371. DOI: 10.1080/13537900600926147.
- Joosse P (2012) The Presentation of the Charismatic Self in Everyday Life: Reflections on a Canadian New Religious Movement. *Sociology of Religion* 73(2): 174–199. DOI: 10.1093/socrel/srr045.

- Joosse P (2014) Becoming a God: Max Weber and the social construction of charisma. *Journal of Classical Sociology* 14(3): 266–283. DOI: 10.1177/1468795X14536652.
- Joosse P (2017) Max Weber's Disciples: Theorizing the Charismatic Aristocracy. *Sociological Theory* 35(4): 334–358. DOI: 10.1177/0735275117740402.
- Joosse P (2018) Countering Trump: Toward a Theory of Charismatic Counter-Roles. *Social Forces* 97(2): 921–944. DOI: 10.1093/sf/soy036.
- Jung CG (1968) *Man and His Symbols*. New York, NY: Turtleback Books.
- Junker A (2014) Follower Agency and Charismatic Mobilization in Falun Gong. *Sociology of Religion* 75(3): 418–441. DOI: 10.1093/socrel/sru021.
- Kaiser K (2009) Protecting Respondent Confidentiality in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Health Research* 19(11): 1632–1641. DOI: 10.1177/1049732309350879.
- Kauppi N (2019) *Toward a Reflexive Political Sociology of the European Union: Fields, Intellectuals and Politicians*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kligman G (1990) *The Wedding of the Dead: Ritual, Poetics, and Popular Culture in Transylvania*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Kligman G and Verdery K (2011) *Peasants under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Koehler J (2008) *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Kohler-Hausmann I (2018) *Misdemeanorland: Criminal Courts and Social Control in an Age of Broken Windows Policing*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kohout P (2016) *Kde je zakopán pes [Where the Dog is Buried]*. Prague: Mladá fronta.
- Kolář P and Pullmann M (2017) *Co byla normalizace?: studie o pozdním socialismu*. Prague: NLN.
- Komaromi A (2018) Between two worlds: late Soviet Jews in Leningrad. *East European Jewish Affairs* 48(1): 23–40. DOI: 10.1080/13501674.2018.1442046.
- Konrad G and Szelenyi I (1979) *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*. 1st edition. New York, NY: Harcourt.
- Kopeček M (2019) Kritika, řízení, byznys: Sociální výzkum a sociologie jako nástroje vládnutí v Československu po roce 1969 [Critique, Leadership, Business: Social Research and Sociology as the Means of Governance in Czechoslovakia after 1969]. In: *Architekti Dlouhé Změny: Expertní Kořeny Postsocialismu v*

Československu [*The Architects of a Long Transformation: Expert Roots of Post-Socialism in Czechoslovakia*]. Prague: Argo, pp. 217–265.

Kris E and Kurz O (1981) *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Kůželová M, Michela M and Stýblová M (2018) Czechoslovakia. In: Apor B, Apor P, and Horváth S (eds) *The Handbook of COURAGE: Cultural Opposition and Its Heritage in Eastern Europe*. Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Lamont M (2002) *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class and Immigration*. New York, NY: Harvard University Press.

Lamont M (2009) *How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lamont M and Molnár V (2002) The Study of Boundaries Across the Social Sciences. *Annual Review of Sociology* 28.

Lancaster K (2017) Confidentiality, anonymity and power relations in elite interviewing: conducting qualitative policy research in a politicised domain. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 20(1): 93–103. DOI: 10.1080/13645579.2015.1123555.

Lang GE and Lang K (1988) Recognition and Renown: The Survival of Artistic Reputation. *American Journal of Sociology* 94(1): 79–109.

Larsen H (2016) *Performing Legitimacy. Studies in High Culture and the Public Sphere*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Leighton B (2014) The time an outrageous pub landlord managed to get Swindon into the New York Times. Available at: <https://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/11136446.the-time-an-outrageous-pub-landlord-managed-to-get-swindon-into-the-new-york-times/> (accessed 27 July 2019).

Lindholm C (1990) *Charisma*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Lipset SM (1959) American Intellectuals: Their Politics and Status. *Daedalus* 88(3): 460–486.

Lipset SM and Dobson RB (1972) The Intellectual as Critic and Rebel: With Special Reference to the United States and the Soviet Union. *Daedalus* 101(3): 137–198.

Lloyd VW (2018) *In Defense of Charisma*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Lukács G [1952] (1980) *The Destruction of Reason*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.

- MacKenzie DA (1981) *Statistics in Britain, 1865-1930: The Social Construction of Scientific Knowledge*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Mannheim K (1971) Conservative Thought. In: *From Karl Mannheim*. New York, NY: Transaction Publishers, pp. 260–304.
- Mannheim K [1927] (2012) *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. Forgotten Books.
- Mannheim K [1929] (2015) *Ideology And Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Fine Books.
- McCormick L (2015) *Performing Civility: International Competitions in Classical Music*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McKernan B (2018) Video games, contestation, and meaning: a strong program approach to studying artistic legitimation. *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*. DOI: 10.1057/s41290-018-0060-3.
- McLaughlin N (1998) How to Become a Forgotten Intellectual: Intellectual Movements and the Rise and Fall of Erich Fromm. *Sociological Forum* 13(2): 215–246.
- McLaughlin N (2000) The sociology of philosophies: A global theory of intellectual change. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 36(2): 171–174.
- Megan M (2008) The Growth of Czech Feminism: Analyzing Resistance Activities through a Gendered Lens, 1968 to 1993. *Gender, rovné příležitosti, výzkum* 10: 37–44.
- Merton RK (1979) *The Sociology of Science: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*. Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press.
- Merton RKK (1996) *On Social Structure and Science*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Mertz E (2007) *The Language of Law School: Learning to 'Think Like a Lawyer'*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Michels R (1915) *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.
- Mio JS, Riggio RE, Levin S, et al. (2005) Presidential leadership and charisma: The effects of metaphor. *The Leadership Quarterly* 16(2): 287–294. DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.01.005.
- Morgan M and Baert P (2015) *Conflict in the Academy: A Study in the Sociology of Intellectuals*. 2015 edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Pivot.
- Morris RC (1995) All Made Up: Performance Theory and the New Anthropology of Sex and Gender. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 567–592.

- Možný I (2009) *Proč tak snadno: Některé rodinné důvody sametové revoluce [Why So Easy: Some Family Reasons for the Velvet Revolution]*. Prague: Slon.
- Murakami Wood D (2007) Beyond the Panopticon? Foucault and Surveillance Studies. In: Crampton JW and Elden S (eds) *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 245–263.
- Navara L (2010) *Abeceda Komunismu [The Alphabet of Communism]*. Brno: Host.
- Nettl PJ (1969) Ideas, Intellectuals, and Structures of Dissent. In: Rieff P (ed.) *On Intellectuals: Theoretical Studies and Case Studies*. New York, NY: Doubleday & Company, pp. 53–122.
- News Breezer* (2019) Zuzana Caputova received the European Prize for Political Culture. Available at: <https://newsbreezer.com/slovakiaeng/zuzana-caputova-received-the-european-prize-for-political-culture/> (accessed 11 August 2019).
- Nietzsche F [1883] (1997) *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. New York, NY: Penguin Classics.
- Oates-Indruchová L (2008) The Limits of Thought?: The Regulatory Framework of Social Sciences and Humanities in Czechoslovakia (1968–1989). *Europe-Asia Studies* 60(10): 1767–1782. DOI: 10.1080/09668130802434620.
- Orwell G (1961) *1984*. New York, NY: Signet Classic.
- Parkinson J (2012) Ray Honeyford: Racist or right? *BBC News*, 10 February. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-16968930> (accessed 13 August 2019).
- Parsons T (1939) The Professions and Social Structure. *Social Forces* 17(4): 457–467. DOI: 10.2307/2570695.
- Patočka J (1990) Duchovní člověk a intelektuál [The Spiritual Man and the Intellectual]. *Souvislosti*. Available at: <http://souvislosti.cz/archiv/patocka1-90.htm> (accessed 29 July 2019).
- Patočka J (1999) *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Chicago, IL: Open Court.
- Patočka J (2002) *Plato and Europe*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Pehe V (2019) Authenticating the Past: Archives, Secret Police and Heroism in Contemporary Czech Representations of Socialism. In: *Perceptions of Society in Communist Europe: Regime Archives and Popular Opinion*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 207–222.
- Pereira M do M (2019) Boundary-work that Does Not Work: Social Inequalities and the Non-performativity of Scientific Boundary-work. *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 44(2): 338–365. DOI: 10.1177/0162243918795043.

- Petráň J (2015) *Filozofové dělají revoluci [Philosophers Do The Revolution]*. Prague: Karolinum.
- Placák P (2007) *Fízl [The Cop]*. Praha: Torst.
- Ragsdale BL (2000) Surveillance of African American Men and Its Possible Effect on Social, Emotional, and Psychological Functioning. *Journal of African American Men* 5(1): 33–42.
- Reed IA (2011) *Interpretation and Social Knowledge: On the Use of Theory in the Human Sciences*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Reed IA (2013) Charismatic performance: A study of Bacon's rebellion. *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1(2): 254–287. DOI: 10.1057/ajcs.2013.2.
- Rezek P (2007) *Filozofie a politika kýče [Philosophy and the Politics of Kitsch]*. Prague: Ztichlá klika.
- Rezek P (2011) *Démanty české filozofie [The Diamonds of Czech Philosophy]*. Prague: Ztichlá klika.
- Richterova D (2018) Terrorists and Revolutionaries: The Achilles Heel of Communist Surveillance. *Surveillance & Society* 16(3): 277–297. DOI: 10.24908/ss.v16i3.6958.
- Rigby TH (1970) Bureaucracy and Democracy in the USSR. *The Australian Quarterly* 42(1): 5–14. DOI: 10.2307/20634339.
- Ritchie DA (2014) *Doing Oral History*. 3 edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Ro'i Y (2000) *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Rothenbuhler EW (1988) The Liminal Fight: Mass Strikes as Ritual and Interpretation. In: Alexander J (ed.) *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 66–89.
- Sadri A (1985) Max Weber's Sociology of Religion as a Sociology of Intellectuals. *State, Culture, and Society* 1(2): 85–106.
- Sadri A (1994) *Max Weber's Sociology of Intellectuals*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Safranski R (1999) *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sahlins M (1996) *How 'Natives' Think: About Captain Cook, For Example* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Schreier M (2012) *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*. London: SAGE.
- Scruton R (1988) The New Right in Central Europe I: Czechoslovakia. *Political Studies* 36(3): 449–462. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9248.1988.tb00241.x.
- Sewell WH (1980) *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sewell WH (2005) *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*. Chicago Studies in Practices of Meaning edition. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Shils E (1958) The Intellectuals and the Powers: Some Perspectives for Comparative Analysis. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 1(1): 5–22. DOI: 10.1017/S0010417500000049.
- Shils E (1965) Charisma, Order, and Status. *American Sociological Review* 30(2): 199–213. DOI: 10.2307/2091564.
- Simmel G (1964) *Conflict / The Web Of Group Affiliations*. 1st Free Press Pbk. Ed edition. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Skilling HG (1976) *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Skilling HG (1998) Stalinism and Czechoslovak Political Culture. In: Tucker RC (ed.) *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, pp. 257–280.
- Skovajsa M and Balon J (2017) *Sociology in the Czech Republic: Between East and West*. London: Palgrave.
- Smith P (1998) Barbarism and Civility in the Discourses of Fascism, Communism and Democracy. In: Alexander J (ed.) *Real Civil Societies: Dilemmas of Institutionalization*. London: SAGE.
- Smith P (2012) *Why War?: The Cultural Logic of Iraq, the Gulf War, and Suez*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Smith P (2014) The Cost of Collaboration: Reflections Upon Randall Collins' Theory of Collective Intellectual Production via Émile Durkheim: A Biography. *Anthropological Quarterly* 87(1): 245–254. DOI: 10.1353/anq.2014.0012.
- Sobell V (1987) Czechoslovakia: the Legacy of Normalization. *East European Politics and Societies* 2(1): 35–68. DOI: 10.1177/0888325488002001002.
- Sohm R (1904) *Outlines of Church History*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Stampnitzky L (2011) Disciplining an Unruly Field: Terrorism Experts and Theories of Scientific/Intellectual Production. *Qualitative Sociology* 34(1): 1–19. DOI: 10.1007/s11133-010-9187-4.
- Steinmetz G (2017) Field Theory and Interdisciplinarity: History and Sociology in Germany and France during the Twentieth Century. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 59(2): 477–514. DOI: 10.1017/S0010417517000111.
- Stevenson N (2019) Raymond Williams and the politics of the commons: The performative quality of the intellectual. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 22(5): 691–705. DOI: 10.1177/1367877919849958.
- Stibbe M and McDermott K (2006) Revolution and Resistance in Eastern Europe: An Overview. In: McDermott K and Stibbe M (eds) *Revolution and Resistance in Eastern Europe: Challenges to Communist Rule*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, pp. 1–13.
- Svenonius O and Björklund F (2018) Explaining attitudes to secret surveillance in post-communist societies. *East European Politics* 34(2): 123–151. DOI: 10.1080/21599165.2018.1454314.
- Svenonius O, Björklund F and Waszkiewicz P (2014) Surveillance, lustration and the open society : Poland and Eastern Europe. In: Boersma K, Van Brakel R, Fonio C, et al. (eds) *Histories of State Surveillance in Europe and Beyond*. London: Routledge, pp. 95–117.
- Szakolczai A (2005) Moving Beyond the Sophists: Intellectuals in East Central Europe and the Return of Transcendence. *European Journal of Social Theory* 8(4): 417–433. DOI: 10.1177/1368431005056421.
- Szentkuthy M [1939] (2012) *Marginalia on Casanova: St. Orpheus Breviary I*. New York, NY: Contra Mundum Press.
- Sztompka P (2000) *Trust: A Sociological Theory*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Tait R (2019) Slovakia's new president buoys Czech liberals on first foreign visit. *The Guardian*, 20 June. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/20/slovakias-liberal-president-zuzana-caputova-makes-first-visit-to-czech-republic> (accessed 18 July 2019).
- Taylor B (1976) Conversion and Cognition: An Area for Empirical Study in the Microsociology of Religious Knowledge. *Social Compass* 23(1): 5–22. DOI: 10.1177/003776867602300101.
- Thomas WI and Znaniecki F (1927) *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

- Tikhomirov A (2017) The Grammar of Trust and Distrust under State Socialism after Stalin. Introduction. *Journal of Modern European History* 15(3): 313–329. DOI: 10.17104/1611-8944-2017-3-313.
- Tomek V (2016) Czechoslovakia: The Czech Path between Totalitarianism and Democracy. In: Graaff B de and Nyce JM (eds) *Handbook of European Intelligence Cultures*. Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 81–94.
- Tucker A (1996) Shipwrecked: Patočka's Philosophy of Czech History. *History and Theory* 35(2): 196–216. DOI: 10.2307/2505361.
- Tucker A (2001) *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- van den Hoonaard WC (2003) Is Anonymity an Artefact in Ethnographic Research? *Journal of Academic Ethics* 1(2): 141–151. DOI: 10.1023/B:JAET.00000006919.58804.4c.
- Vaněk M and Mücke P (2016) *Velvet Revolutions: An Oral History of Czech Society*. Oxford University Press.
- Vatulescu C (2010) *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Vaughan D (2004) Theorizing disaster: Analogy, historical ethnography, and the Challenger accident. *Ethnography* 5(3): 315–347.
- Verdery K (1995) *National Ideology Under Socialism*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Verdery K (2018) *My Life as a Spy: Investigations in a Secret Police File*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- von Hippel W, Ronay R, Baker E, et al. (2016) Quick Thinkers Are Smooth Talkers: Mental Speed Facilitates Charisma. *Psychological Science* 27(1): 119–122. DOI: 10.1177/0956797615616255.
- Weber M (1946) Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions. In: *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, pp. 323–359.
- Weber M [1915] (1959) *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Weber M (1968) *On Charisma and Institution Building*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Weber M [1921] (2013) *Economy and Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Wignall R (2016) 'A man after god's own heart': charisma, masculinity and leadership at a charismatic Church in Brighton and Hove, UK. *Religion* 46(3): 389–411. DOI: 10.1080/0048721X.2016.1169452.
- Wimmer A (2013) *Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power, Networks*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Wohl H (2015) Community Sense: The Cohesive Power of Aesthetic Judgment. *Sociological Theory* 33(4): 299–326. DOI: 10.1177/0735275115617800.
- Žáček P (1996) Iluze a realita: Poslední pokus o reformu Státní bezpečnosti [Illusion and Reality: The Last Attempt at Reforming the State Security]. *Securitas Imperii* (3): 7–42.
- Zeller BE (2014) *Heaven's Gate: America's UFO Religion*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Znaniecki F [1940] (1986) *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge*. New York, NY: Transaction Publishers.
- Zumr J (1967) S Janem Patočkou o filosofii a filosofech [With Jan Patočka on Philosophy and Philosophers]. *Filosofický časopis [Philosophy Review]* 15(5): 585–598.

REFERENCES: SAMIZDAT ARTICLES

- Benda, V (1985) Slovo úvodem [An Introductory Word]. *Paraf* 1 (1): 3-8.
- Benda, V (1986) O neblahých pamfletech [On Baleful Pamphlets] *Paraf* 2 (3): 88-90.
- Benda, V (1987) Závěrečná poznámka [A Concluding Remark] *Paraf* 3 (1): 131.
- dmzl (1988) Arnold van Gennep. *Kritický sborník* 8 (4): 39-43.
- DN (1987) O jednom dluhu Janu Patočkovi a jeho odkazu [On One Debt to Jan Patočka and to His Legacy]. *Paraf* 3 (2): 106-107.
- Havel, V (1986) Cestou k poslednímu [On the Way to the Last One]. *Paraf* 2 (3): 105-106.
- Hejdánek, L 1982. K situaci filosofie [On Philosophy's Situation]. *Studie* 24 (81): 279-282.
- id (1983) Epistulae ex carcere [Letters from Prison]. *Kritický sborník* 3 (1): 43-53.
- Kohák E. (1986) O čase výchovy [On The Era of Education]. *Paraf* 2 (2): 113-116.
- Kroupa, D (1980) Život filosofa [The Life of a Philosopher]. *Studie* 68: 93-122.
- Michálek, J (1987) Kritik na hostině [A Critic at the Feast]. *Paraf* 3 (1): 126-128.
- M.P. (1985) Sidonius a Sakateka: Dialog o páté cestě a dialog o umění [Sidonius and Sakateka: The Dialogue on the Fifth Way and the Dialogue on Art]. *Paraf* 1 (2): 103-106.
- Neubauer, Zdeněk. 1980. 'Co je to filosofie' [What is Philosophy]. *Studie* 22 (70): 326-354.
- pf (1985) Filosofie/nebo filozofie? [Philosophy or Philozophy?] 1 *Kritický sborník* 5 (1): 79-86
- pf (1986) Filosofie/nebo filozofie? [Philosophy or Philozophy?] *Kritický sborník* 6 (1): 108-125.
- redakce SE (1988) Úvodní poznámka [Introductory Note] *Střední Evropa* 5 (1): 2-4.

- rzk (1986) Nad druhým číslem Parafu [On the Second Volume of Paraf]. *Střední Evropa* 2 (5): 81-88.
- rzk (1987) Neubauerův ontologický dar: Ricoeurovské eseje [Neubauer's Ontological Gift: Ricoeurian Essays]. *Střední Evropa* 2 (5): 81-88.
- Tomin, Julius. (1978) Já jsem jenom vrátná [I am just a receptionist]. *Studie* 20 (58): 69-71.
- V.B. (1985) Rudolf Starý: Potíže s hlubinnou psychologií [Rudolf Starý: The Trouble with Depth Psychology]. *Paraf* 1 (1): 111.
- XYZ (1977) Čeští filosofové po 30 letech: Současný stav „normalisované filosofie [Czech Philosophers after 30 years] *Studie* 49: 4-22.

REFERENCES: JAN HUS EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION
ARCHIVE

- Douglas-Homes, Jessica. Letter to Roger Scruton. 1987. Dossier *Roger Vernon Scruton Correspondence 5th October-10th December 1987*.
- Grant, Robert. Report for Jan Hus Educational Foundation from visit to Prague (3rd-6th February 1984). Dossier *Prague Reports 1983-1986*.
- Hale, John. Report for Jan Hus Educational Foundation from visit to Prague (16th-20th September 1985). Dossier *Prague Reports 1983-1986*.
- Judt, Tony. Report for Jan Hus Educational Foundation from visit to Prague (14th-17th December 1986). Dossier *Prague Reports 1983-1986*.
- Kroupa, Daniel. Filosofické studijní semináře [Philosophy Study Seminars]. Letter sent to Jan Hus Educational Foundation on 7th April 1988.
- Lukes, Steven. Report for Jan Hus Educational Foundation from visit to Prague (12th-14th September 1986). Dossier *Prague Reports 1983-1986*.
- Sanders, David. Report for Jan Hus Educational Foundation from visit to Prague (25th May-1st June 1989). Dossier *Prague Reports Sept 1988-Dec 1989*.
- Scruton, Roger V. A Letter to the Jan Hus Educational Foundation Board. Dossier *Core Correspondence II: File A 1985*.

Appendix 1: Secret Police Dossiers

Name	Dossier Registration Number
Luděk Bednář	KR-585782 MV
Ivan Dejmal	KR-829108 MV
Miroslav Drozda	KR-645053 MV
Maximilán Duren	KR-725175 MV
Lenka Dvořáková	KR-696375 MV
Jiří Fiala	KR-807708 MV
Dana Horáková	KR-802820 MV
Markéta Hrbková	TS-751178 MV
Alena Hromádková	KR-855497 MV
Matthew Hutton	KR-845253 MV
Jiří Chmel	KR-714275 MV
Karel Kosík	KR-838719 MV
Jan Kozlík	KR-830053 MV
Zdeněk Kratochvíl	KR-698275 MV
Jaromír Kučera	KR-817453 MV
Rudolf Kučera	KR-761997 MV
Jan Kupčík	KR-698842 MV
Jiří Němec	KR-749386 MV
Pavla Němcová	KR-831775 MV
Zdeněk Neubauer	KR-839864 MV
Zdeněk Pinc	KR-813002 MV
Jiří Polívka	KR-627553 MV
Vladimír Prajzler	KR-718720 MV
Petr Ragan	KR-690264 MV
Ivan Santar	KR-724842 MV
Roger Scruton	KR-845942 MV
Martin Šimsa	KR-850697 MV
Jan Sokol	KR-816042 MV
Julius Tomin	KR-705731 MV
Ivan Vyhnał	KR-700497 MV

Appendix 2: Interview List

Interview number	Characteristic (at the time of interview)
Interview 1	Age 70, former seminar convener, currently associate professor of political science
Interview 2	Age 56, former seminar student, currently politician
Interview 3	Age 76, former seminar convener, currently retired and senior research position
Interview 4	Age 69, former seminar convener, currently associate professor of philosophy
Interview 5	Age 60, former seminar student, currently associate professor of philosophy
Interview 6	Age 54, former seminar student, currently research institute director
Interview 7	Age 80, former seminar convener, currently retired and senior research position
Interview 8	Age 55, former seminar student, currently library director
Interview 9	Age 55, former seminar student, currently associate professor of philosophy
Interview 10	Age 70, former seminar convener, currently associate professor of philosophy
Interview 11	Age 63, former seminar student, senior research position
Interview 12	Age 68, former seminar student, currently associate professor of philosophy
Interview 13	Age 56, former seminar student, currently in liberal profession
Interview 14	Age 87, British academic visitor to seminars, currently retired and emeritus fellow at Oxford University
Interview 15	Age 74, British academic visitor to seminars, currently emeritus fellow at Oxford University
Interview 16 ⁴³	Age 63, former seminar student, currently professor of applied philosophy

⁴³ This was follow up interview conducted over e-mail, containing only one question, with a goal to confirm an instance of an internecine conflict.

Appendix 3: Interview Information Sheet

Information Sheet

Research project: Underground Seminars in Socialist Czechoslovakia

Research investigator: Dominik Želinský

Institution: The University of Edinburgh

Address & contact details: Hrázka 36, Brno 621 00, Czech Republic

About the project

This research project focuses on sociological analysis of underground seminars in ‘normalised’ Czechoslovakia. Its main aim is to investigate motivations of participants, their experiences, and social effects of these groups. The research draws combines interviews, primary and secondary literature, as well as documents accessible through the archive of the Czechoslovak secret police.

This data collection is undertaken as a part of doctoral dissertation project. It will be transcribed and analysed only by Dominik Želinský. The data are available only to the investigator, and will not be shared with any other researcher or organization. All data will be anonymized. Parts of the data can be used in academic papers and presentations of the investigator in the future. This research had been reviewed and approved by the Edinburgh University Research Ethics Board. I will be deeply grateful for your participation in this study.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any point of time. You can at any time request that specific information that you may have shared be removed from the data corpus.

You will receive no payment for your participation. After the research is finalized, you will be offered the text of the doctoral dissertation. Your data will not be used for

commercial purposes, and therefore you should not expect any royalties or payments from the research project in the future.

About the researcher

I am a doctoral candidate in the department of sociology at the University of Edinburgh, where I work on a dissertation concerned with underground seminars in ‘normalised’ Czechoslovakia. The topic of social and cultural situation of the arts and the intelligentsia under State Socialism had been my long-term interest, developed during my bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Masaryk University. Apart from underground seminars, I have worked on projects focused on jazz music under Stalinism and Czechoslovak Majales protests in 1956. If you are interested in knowing more, please contact me or visit my university webpage at:

http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/gradschool/community_and_representation/research_student_profiles/sociology/dominik_zelinsky.

For more information

Name: Dominik Želinský

Address: Hrázka 36, Brno 621 00, Czech Republic

E-mail: Dominik.Zelinsky@ed.ac.uk.

Supervisors

Name: Dr Lisa McCormick

E-Mail: lisa.mccormick@ed.ac.uk

Name: Mr Ross Bond

E-Mail: R.J.Bond@ed.ac.uk

Appendix 4: Sample Interview Schedule (Interview 4)

1. Could you tell me about your family background? What was the environment that you grew up in?
2. How did you first get interested in philosophy?
3. Could you tell me about your experience in the 1960s? How was Prague for somebody your age at that time?
4. How did you get in contact with philosophy circles at that time?
5. Could you tell me about your experience of the 1968 Soviet invasion?
6. Could you tell me about the intellectual life in Prague between the invasion and the Charter 77?
7. Where were you employed during the 1970s and 1980s?
8. Could you tell me more specifically about your experiences with unofficial philosophy seminars? How did they emerge? Who attended?
9. Could you tell me about your contacts with Western academics visiting Czechoslovakia?
10. What was your relation with the people who worked at official institutions?
11. Could you tell me about your experience with the secret police or the state forces in general?

12. I found a report of Jan Hus Educational Foundation, which mentions your plan to establish a systematic school of unofficial philosophy. How did this idea come about? Did you manage to create the school?
13. In several of your previous interviews, you talked openly about your religious conversion. Could you tell me more about the intersection of religion and philosophy in the unofficial scene?
14. Did you continue your relationships with the people whom you got to know in the unofficial seminars also after the revolution?
15. Do you think, looking back, that the pursuit of unofficial philosophy was meaningful?
16. Do you think that unofficial seminars such as those you convened had some lasting impact of Czech public discourse and society?